



NEW CRITICAL ESSAYS

# HEGEL'S

*Phenomenology of Spirit*

edited by

ALFRED DENKER & MICHAEL VATER

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Humanity Books

An Imprint of Prometheus Books

59 John Glenn Drive  
Amherst, New York 14228-2119

Published 2003 by Humanity Books, an imprint of Prometheus Books

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Amherst, New York 14228-2119

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FAX: 716-691-0137

WWW.PROMETHEUSBOOKS.COM

14 13 12 11 10      5 4 3

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Hegel's Phenomenology of spirit : new critical essays / edited by Alfred Denker and Michael Vater.

p. cm.

Includes bibliographical references and index.

ISBN 13: 978-1-59102-056-1

ISBN 10: 1-59102-056-5

1. Hegel, Georg Wilhelm Friedrich, 1770-1831. *Phänomenologie des Geistes*.  
2. Spirit. 3. Consciousness. 4. Truth. I. Denker, Alfred, 1960- II. Vater, Michael G., 1944-

B2929.H349 2003

193--dc21

2003044999

Printed in the United States of America on acid-free

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# INTRODUCTION

MICHAEL G. VATER

**T**hanks largely to the work of Jean Hyppolite and his famous seminar, peopled by a whole generation of young thinkers who would come to dominate the century's thought in France, Hegel's presence to twentieth-century and subsequent philosophy rests on readings of the 1805–1807 *Phenomenology of Spirit*.<sup>1</sup> Read in the light of Marx's *Paris Manuscripts* and with an eye to constructivist theories in epistemology, philosophy of mind, and social and political philosophy, the dynamic core of Hegelian thinking—its logic of reversing perspectives, awareness of history, and pervasive social analysis—has saturated French philosophy. The same cannot be said for the English-speaking and German traditions, which generally reacted to Hegelian thought more than they assimilated it, and which, when friendly to Hegel, tend to be focused more on the timeless conceptual splendor of the *Encyclopedia*'s system than on the *Phenomenology*'s novel twists and turns of living spirit in its educational-historical travels to maturity.

This volume presents new essays by diverse scholars—American, Belgian, Dutch, Italian, German, some of them established, some of

them young—who lack a common approach to this text or to Hegelian philosophy as such, but who see in the *Phenomenology*, nonetheless, either one of the most important historical foundations for contemporary thinking or a ‘guide star’ for the task ahead. Some of the essays are exegetical, but many are focused on systematic problems in theory of knowledge, social philosophy, and philosophy of religion. Among the more textually based and historically focused papers, some authors concentrate on Hegel’s philosophical milieu, others on the categories and logic of famous chapters of the *Phenomenology*. Though they can be studied in many ways and contexts, as is the purpose of this introduction to suggest, the volume groups them according to a rough approximation of the chapters of the *Phenomenology* that they take as inspiration or text. Since Hegel ends with the crossroads (or Golgotha) of the figures of scientific cognition and Western history, and with the gushing forth from infinitude of the host of distinctive shapes of spirit the book has explored as fixed forms of appearance of spirit, it is appropriate that Holger Zaborowski’s (chapter 1) treatment of Hegel’s early philosophy of history be placed first. His careful historical documentation of twentieth-century reaction to that strand of thinking in Hegel will serve also as a review of the contemporary reception of Hegel thought as a whole.

## **I. A ‘MODEST’ HEGEL: THOUGHT’S BEING-AT-HOME-WITH- ITSELF IN THE FINITE**

None of the authors collected here discusses the ‘old problems’ that have bedeviled Hegel scholarship: the double subtitle of the book, its ambiguous position vis-à-vis ‘the system’, its different but overlapping book plans.<sup>2</sup> They take the text as it is, eschew offering a global interpretation of its significance, and attempt to read anew. The reception of an old text into a new context of thought is, as Hans-Georg Gadamer reminded us, the delicate (and fallible) attempt to get at the questions it conceived and answered through the questions that we put to it. There is no guarantee of convergence. Tom Rockmore’s



(chapter 13) treatment of spirit and epistemology reminds us of this. Though one can locate Hegel quite accurately as reacting to the apriorism of Kant's transcendental turn or as transforming a secularized version of Christianity's 'Holy Spirit', a vivid grasp of Hegel's spiritual-constructivist theory of cognition depends on our appreciation of foundationalist and antifoundationalist debates today. The Cartesian and Kantian approaches of designating a fundamental certainty, an Archimedean point capable of supporting the vast structure of all our sciences, have historically failed; our scientists speak the language of a loose social-constructivist attitude: their questions, their answers, their whole research programs are functions of the research community, the limitations of its intelligence, and the intellectual morality of its practitioners. The epistemological subject is the real person, argues Rockmore, whose intelligence and morality are both functions of the human community. Human knowledge is social and historical; all of its claims to ultimacy, accuracy, or 'absoluteness' have to be translated into the framework of "spirit's social history" to make sense at all.

Holger Zaborowski (chapter 1) makes the same point, starting from the opposite direction. His major concern is with Hegel's ideas about history prior to authoring the *Phenomenology*, with the static Platonic omnipresence of Schelling's thought in 1801 giving way to the more historicist and dynamic ideas of 1807, where the absolute itself is viewed as undergoing historical process in order to arrive at the complexity and integration of its own being. Zaborowski notes that Hegel never does get free of Platonism; if history has a point, it does not seem able to 'get a point' just by the accretion of the empirical achievements of finite subjects. Yet there is no one subject or thing that 'does history' other than these finite subjects. Zaborowski's point is mirrored in the dialectical structure of the *Phenomenology*, where consciousness occupies a double standpoint, the standpoint of natural consciousness—which always believes it is directly in an objective situation with its knowing and acting—and the absolute standpoint, in which all its cognition, beliefs, and styles of action have been socially tested and come with the warrant of historical tradition. Natural consciousness does not exist as such in post-infancy, walking and talking instantiations, nor does absolute con-

sciousness exist as such in particular locales and persons. But existing persons (and institutions) are imbued with absoluteness insofar as they live in the ‘end time’ of history’s perennial flowering. Hegel’s book is a typological narrative—a *Bildungsroman*, a vision-quest, an intellectual odyssey—for readers who live ‘at home’ or at quest’s end, but without full appreciation of their having been carried along by the journey of civilization and of living a life informed by its *telos*.

## **2. READING THE PHENOMENOLOGY: PLAN, STRUCTURE, AND HISTORICAL CONTEXT**

The ever-unfolding flow of thought one finds in Hegel’s texts never ceases to amaze and appall its reader; it is disconcerting enough (as one intuits, usually on uncomfortable occasions) that one’s own thought is fluid and never definitive without discovering that thought, in its essential nature, is never finished. Christoph Asmuth (chapter 12) focuses on this genetic or developmental character to differentiate Hegel’s philosophy from the static eidetic formalism of Schelling’s identity-philosophy. Hegel does this himself in the *Phenomenology*’s preface, where, in ways both polemical and programmatic, he pictures a genuine philosophy developing its subject matter through progressive differentiation just the way the conscious living subject develops her cognition and action through organic, temporally differentiated development. Schelling’s philosophical technique, as demonstrated in the *Presentation of My System* of 1801, had been to employ an ‘algebra of difference’ to reduce qualitative difference to quantitative differences, then to compress all these quantified structures into ‘identity’ through the repetition of a single platform of appearance which dictates that what is must appear in all ontological modes simultaneously, once as identity, again as difference, and finally as totality (Kant’s categories of quantity).<sup>3</sup> Through the methodical feint of having philosophical content expound itself as the clarification of appearances as they arise, Hegel is able to provide a dynamic, not a static, connection between the figures he treats in the

*Phenomenology* and to imbue the whole movement with the conceptual correlate of live subjectivity. That “substance becomes subject” is both the program and the method of Hegel’s work. It is, of course, subject to the same sort of critique to which he subjected Schelling’s encyclopedic formalism; it can be viewed as a “bloodless march of categories,” or in the case of the *Phenomenology*, a procession of spectral shapes with no bearing on human life, cognitive or practical.

Angelica Nuzzo (chapter 10) supplies an answer to this charge: there is nothing neutral about the organization, drive, and direction of the accumulating narrative of the *Phenomenology*, for it is about cognition, our core or fundamental life technique, and its path is fashioned by thought’s energetic investment in the ‘matter at hand’, whatever the stage of its development. There is not a mere tabular or information-aggregating character to Hegel’s ‘system’, then, because it has a life of its own, reflected in its concrete deployment, situational struggle, and recollective advance into new contents. In the *Phenomenology*’s final chapter on Absolute Knowing, this autotelic drive comes into its own, drops the pretense of being at all involved with the other in its cognitive or active stances, and becomes ‘absolute’, ab-solved of all outside relation and reference. This absolute cognition, argues Nuzzo, is Hegel’s reply to Kant’s arguments against the possibility of transexperiential metaphysics. Though, under Kant’s stipulations, no *object* can ever be advanced to the status of idea, i.e., to being the totality of conditions for *X* or ‘the unconditioned’, cognition as communally-historically refined over the course of (Western) civilization can—at least as a body of methodologies suited to various contexts—be elevated into that position. And from that position, if any, the conceptual elaboration of the contents of thought can begin (as *science* of logic).

Many of the writers in this volume are sensitive to the relationship between Schelling and Hegel in the years between their initial collaboration on the *Critical Journal* and the publication of the *Phenomenology*. Dale Snow (chapter 3) looks to the essay on scientific cognition that Hegel penned after completing the book and which he placed in front of it as a preface.<sup>4</sup> Closely examining the history of the *Phenomenology*’s writing, she examines the three memorable gibes that Hegel addresses to his adversaries: that he or they employ a

‘monochromatic formalism’ (an abstractive procedure applied to all contents) for philosophical method, that he or they produce nullities as results (“to palm off as the Absolute the dark night in which, as the saying goes, all cows are black”), and that he or they produce an unreflective philosophy (“knowledge shot from a pistol”). Reviewing scholarly opinions as to the identity of Hegel’s targets here, Snow argues that Schelling could not be the ‘monochromatic formalist’ nor the ‘dark absolute theorist’. Schelling, however, with his mysterious, or at least ill-explained, ‘intellectual intuition’ is the likely target of the “shot from a pistol” gibe.<sup>5</sup>

Michael Vater (chapter 5) searches for traces of Schelling, and Hegel’s reaction to him, in the body of *Phenomenology* itself. The final chapter on Absolute Knowing acknowledges that Schelling’s identity-philosophy serves as the threshold for scientific philosophy. Since he not only followed Fichte in seeing spirit or self-conscious I-hood as the philosophical principle, but saw its triple form—as the logical exclusion of difference, the collapse of identity into the pure externality of space and nature, and the self-return of spirit as spirit in self-consciousness—Schelling essentially grasped the truth. In the earlier chapter on Understanding, however, Schelling is implicitly criticized for a linear and abstractive form of thinking which doubles the empirical world with a realm of laws, inverts their ontological significance, and lets the qualitative richness of phenomena slip through the net of theory. In *Observing Reason*, Hegel targets Schelling’s *Naturphilosophie* in a more obvious way, arguing that static categories of dubious significance (e.g., sensibility, irritability, reproduction) cannot translate biological phenomena into the language of the concept. Only with the advance from linear thinking to the self-contradictory and self-referential infinity of self-consciousness can the conceptual significance of life appear and nature as a whole enter into the content of philosophy. Hegel’s implication is clear for those that can read it: if the philosopher who sets out to capture nature for philosophy a priori is incapable of sensibly treating biology, what hope would there be for an account of consciousness or spirit from the manufacturer of such crypto-empirical redundancies? Vater sees a connection between these criticisms, the preface’s critique of formal, negative, and immediate

analyses and the “*substance* must become *subject*” program of the final chapter and the preface. Only if the implicitly self-referential or ‘infinite’ character of spirit’s activity is recognized (on both the knowing and the known poles of the object of philosophical analysis) will the bundle of subjective and objective spirit *doing the philosophizing* recognize itself in the content it reconstructs.

### 3. READING THE PHENOMENOLOGY: THEMATIC THREADS

What one critic hopefully sees as a “ladder to the Absolute” may strike another reader as just the contorted paths of a maze—which may or may not have a big bull in the center, if there is a center. Indeed, there are turning points or ‘transitions’ in Hegel’s narrative, but whether one gets ‘up’, ‘over’, or ‘beyond’ the subject matter of any of the *Phenomenology*’s discussions or simply farther in, deeper, and more lost may be the subject of conjecture. Hence, it is a favorite strategy of commentators to suggest thematic strands, conceptual nodes of a noticeable sort that may function as reminders when encountered in slightly transformed contexts—something like pre-Wagnerian leitmotifs. Asmuth suggests that *development* or *genesis* is one of threads through the labyrinth, Zaborowski that *history* as teleological unfolding serves such a function, Vater that *self-referentiality* or quasi-Heisenbergian involvement of the observer in the observed does the trick. None of these authors suggests that there is any hurdy-gurdy repetition of the same involved in the *Phenomenology*; they do suggest, however, that there are certain episodes in story that illuminate what is going on both in the whole and in the rest of the parts.

Klaus Brinkmann (chapter 9) looks to the moral phenomena described and transfigured in the *Phenomenology* for such a thread. Nor is it a strange place to look, since the transcendental-historical mix of methods Hegel employs shuffles the phenomena of cognitive and social-moral life so thoroughly that the reader is barely able to see, looking backward in our cultural history, the motivation for an Aristotle or a Kant to want to make as decisive a cut between theo-

retical and practical reason as they did.<sup>6</sup> By sorting out the suite of moral phenomena that Hegel analyzes in the *Phenomenology*, one at least gets a picture of the whole as evolving from simple to more complex situations, from the privative condition of the isolated economic agent and the beauties of private conscience to the more social and institutionally mediated patterns of behavior found in the modern community and state. Brinkmann focuses on the moment of forgiveness, the dissolution of the (world-estranged) attitude of conscience, transgression, and judgment—all regrettably ‘personal’ lenses for evaluating action—into richer social contexts. Forgiveness is ambiguous as a figure of experienced consciousness and as a moment of spirit’s life: whereas the *Philosophy of Right* makes it the door to *Sittlichkeit*, the people’s life as regulated by their inherited and (somewhat) politically malleable institutions, the *Phenomenology* connects it to religion and to the figurative and social reconfiguration of actual social life that this domain of spirit provides, a reconfiguration that is at once a heightening of social integration and a projection of that deepened self-grasp of spirit onto an imaginary world.

Ludovicus de Vos and Paul Cobben make somewhat of the same move in the logical order, finding a few patterns of conceptual elaboration, *infinity* and *relationship* respectively, that can be taken as keys for interpreting the whole. De Vos (chapter 6) works with great precision on a small patch of text, the transition between the chapters on Understanding and Self-Consciousness, showing that it essentially involved the category of infinity. On the purely epistemological side, understanding is a technique of editing sequences of phenomena to get at their meaning; it culminates in the phenomenon of life, where thing and intelligence converge as organism or self-regulating life. When life passes over into self-consciousness, however, it seems to isolate itself and become a domain unto itself. The transition demonstrates the social nature of consciousness, however, for in being referred back to itself, self-consciousness is doubled and made essentially social, at first in a negative way (displayed in the Lordship and Bondage chapter), but at last in a way that is positive, secured by interpersonal recognition. Real self-consciousness as the mutual recognition of plural self-consciousnesses is the definition of spirit. Cobben

(chapter 7) works out a reading of the first two sections of the *Phenomenology* (Consciousness and Self-Consciousness) in reference to the Logic of the *Encyclopedia*. Hegel is working from the model Kant provided in his table of categories of how description or understanding proceeds: In the categories of Quantity we have the treatment of all things according to the external relations of space and time; Hegel's chapter on Sense-Certainty, with its evaporation of the content of 'here' and 'now' into universal intersubstitutability shows that thought cannot remain here, for there is nothing to think. The chapter on Perception recapitulates Kant's categories of quality; the interchange of qualitative and quantitative characteristic in the treatment of Proportion and Measure of the *Encyclopedia* displays this same logic. Finally, in the antagonist economic relations of modern life symbolized by the Lordship and Bondage chapter of the section on Self-Consciousness, we find a mirror of the intersubstitution of opposites strategy that is the salient feature of Essence as treated in the *Encyclopedia*. Cobben's general point is that there is a universal categorical feature at work here, of which all or most of the *Phenomenology*'s transitions are instances: connection of opposites, reversal between opposites, antinomy (as Hegel designated it in the *Difference Essay*), or infinity (as used in the Jena *Logic* of 1804). The reason that things will not stay still in Hegel is that doubleness and movement, not the singularity of thinghood, is the nature of reality. Perhaps all observations involve quantum mechanic paradoxes! Cobben suggests that his discussion provides a clue to solving the mind-body problem.

#### **4. THINKING FORWARD FROM THE PHENOMENOLOGY: HEGEL'S IMPACT ON CONTEMPORARY PHILOSOPHY**

We have already mentioned in other contexts some of the writers who draw explicit philosophical lessons from Hegel's first masterwork. Without explicit textual exegesis, Rockmore looks to the introduction's lesson on epistemology—Hegel's meditations on the misleading nature of the Cartesian-Kantian project of securing a com-

pletely defensible foundation for knowledge before one has begun to know—and finds it a satisfactory introduction to contemporary efforts in constructivist epistemology. Only if one were a card-carrying solipsist, wholly in the grip of classical skepticism, would one need an unassailable truth as a foundation for either systematic science or to secure the execution of life projects. The social nature of knowledge, the way it is embedded in the community of human subjects as one of their fundamental life techniques, makes it possible practically to distinguish true cognition from false and to secure warrant for beliefs, though one would be hard pressed to translate this process of the social checking of beliefs into an executable program for a single thinker. Hegel was aware that one indeed ‘*thinks* for oneself’, but at the limit, as an odd case, just as one certainly ‘*talks* to oneself’, but again (hopefully) at the limit and as an odd case, talking with others being the standard procedure. One cannot do the interestingly human things—morality, politics, art, religion, or philosophy—in an unsocial way, though perhaps a culture of division and estrangement persuades the isolated voice of its prophetic singularity.

Robert R. Williams (chapter 2) explicitly addresses Hegel’s contributions to our contemporary awareness of the interpersonal nature of human existence in his chapter on recognition. He finds that Hegel develops the theme episodically in the *Phenomenology*, first and foremost in the transition from consciousness to self-consciousness, where the process of desire and its consummation is projected onto a situation of plural centers of consciousness. In the prototypical social situation depicted in Lordship and Bondage, the process of achieving satisfaction is spread out both temporally and socially, mediated by the conflict of aims and strategies of opposed parties that coalesces into the uneasy peace of economic collaboration. It is from this cauldron of barely simmering turmoil that self-consciousness, self-identity, self-othering, and apprehension of the other arise. Only in return to self from the situation of risk of self and loss does a person assume self-consciousness, that is, only when the potential for social dissonance leads to mutual recognition and one’s abstract freedom is exchanged for ‘communicative freedom’ in the (modern) social and political order. It is within this context, argues Williams, that the autonomy of



the single agent, predicated on self-overcoming, can emerge. Hegel plays out the drama of the production of responsible or self-authorized freedom in various historical segments of the chapter on Spirit, contrasting the ancient world with its subordination of the individual to the ethical substance of the family with the modern world's transformation of morality (judging as one's peers judge) into conscience. The individual is, as spirit if not as an item of psychology, a social product: she steps forth and acts not as a gesture of pure freedom, but as transgression against the established order. The oddity of her own action is perceived as evil, and a second-level recognition must be accomplished in which accuser and accused shed themselves of those particular roles in forgiveness. Recognition and the structures it founds never rise to a harmonious universality; there is a slumbering readiness for antagonism in the very possibility of free action.

Richard Findler (chapter 11) addresses this theme in his chapter contrasting 'sin' or ontological guilt in Hegel and Nietzsche. Hegel assigns sin or ontological guilt to that region of spirit where spirit takes individual form, in an existent spirit which attempts to assume divine form despite its taint of particularity. Revealed religion represents this moment as spirit's self-reconciliation. Hegel claims that evil is not separate from spirit (God), but only a moment of spirit's life and process. Overcoming the perpetual possibility of self-centeredness—or the dividedness from oneself that is natural existence—is a possibility that essentially belongs to spirit. Reconciling sin with goodness, for Hegel, simply involves self-reconciliation. Findler contrasts Nietzsche's genealogy of the "entrenched illness" of bad conscience (from the second essay in *Genealogy of Morals*) to Hegel's process strategy for sublating both good and evil. Looking to the origins of our ways of thought, Nietzsche finds bad conscience to be the product of the human entry into the social situation, where active willing and discharge of energy met reactive forces of restriction (necessary to maintain the social, i.e., restricted human domicile). In Nietzsche's account, the domestication and redirection of active force becomes the vehicle that internalizes pain and punishment. Its thematic focus is the ancestor/gods, to whom one is perpetually indebted for one's existence, and for whom the appropriate payment is extended self-punish-

ment. Christianity moralizes this whole syndrome and paints over the whole of existence with a varnish of guilt. Nietzsche's solution to the problem of evil, then, is to urge one to feel guilty about feeling guilt and to simply reverse the process, countering repression with instinctual 'liberation'. Findler finds that this program for the retrieval of the 'natural' is antithetical to Hegel's hope for spiritual self-reconciliation. Though neither thinker believes there is any independent reality to evil, Nietzsche is closer to resolving the problem than is Hegel, for Hegel's analysis of evil in the economy of spirit makes it permanent in that economy, while Nietzsche straightforwardly diagnoses the phenomenon as disease and proposes a therapeutic regimen.

Alfred Denker (chapter 4) contrasts the way that two of the major figures of twentieth-century phenomenology, Martin Heidegger and Eugen Fink, appropriate Hegel's *Phenomenology*. Each offers a self-consciously edited version of Hegel, Heidegger preferring the systematic, scientific, and quasi-substantial sense of 'the absolute' and 'absolute philosophy' that Hegel promised in titling the book *System of Science: The First Part*, while Fink looks to the processive, always-underway, and quasi-experiential sense of 'the acting and observing subject' that Hegel introduces as both the method and the content of the study, figured by Hegel in the book's other title: *Science of the Experience of Consciousness*. Fink's study privileges the text of Hegel's Introduction, with its focus on the situation of present knowing and its deferral of the skeptic moment to abstract reflection—seemingly an endorsement of the program of phenomenological observation and description. Heidegger focuses instead on the opening chapter on Sense-Certainty and the way that thought and its contents never are fully coordinated so that there is a successful episode of sensation; interpretation intervenes instead, and with the thought-contributed moment always coming to the fore in perception, the bare particular that is both the past intention and the missing 'meaning' of the situation in sensation perpetually escapes. The significance, for Heidegger, of this opening episode is not that thinking must move on to another concrete situation or strategy; it is that it has always already moved on. Thinking is 'absolute', suggests Denker, in that it is essentially absolving, dis-solving, resistant to and perhaps destructive of presence.

Dale Snow concludes her meditations on Hegel's programmatic preface on scientific cognition with deep hesitations about the lucidity, much less the practicality, of Hegel's circular or self-validating dialectical method. What can it mean that philosophy's subject-matter, in being advanced to 'substance', becomes 'subject' or self-moving? Contrary to Hegel's suggestion that scientific cognition is in some sense always already complete, she suggests that it might be essentially incomplete, inconclusive, or at the very least, perpetually underway. Jeffrey Kinlaw (chapter 8) in his study on skepticism and the unhappy consciousness looks to the question of the nature of rationality and finds that, lacking a Platonic essence of rationality or an external absolute as support, the only convincing answer is social and historical: rationality is a practice, a social-historical tradition in which the autonomy and self-sufficiency of the lone arbiter of truth and falsity finds itself placed, and in which it curiously finds its authority both undercut and sustained. In Hegel's analysis of 'unhappy consciousness', self-assured consciousness takes itself as the sole judge of truth and its own sole valid authority. It finds, however, that it cannot be what it sets out to be. Yet it cannot cede its authority claims to anything other than self-consciousness; if it comes to doubt its own rationality and to surrender its extravagant claims, it can only do so to its 'other', to another self-consciousness which will both absolve it from its precarious situation of doubt and re-authorize it as the arbiter. The self-conscious rational being, therefore, must resolve to freely commit itself to an external authority—if it can commend itself to anything external—but it must demand the price that its intrinsic authority over its thought and action be supported. Kinlaw argues that this 'external authority' cannot be a mere 'other'—or else the primitive antagonisms of socioeconomic 'cooperation' seen in the master-slave relationship will break forth again. The only suitable epistemic other is a community sustained by rational traditions. A self-conscious individual can both contribute to the historical flow of such rationality—as the scientific researcher does in her mature and apparently independent professional life—while at the same time being shaped and educated by it—not merely as a neophyte undergoing scientific 'training', but as a working member of a research community that col-

lectively establishes its research direction by, among other things, feedback loops of self-assessment coupled with external evaluation. For Hegel, human self-consciousness escapes the arbitrariness and contingency of its existence and the arrogance of its claims to authority only by freely committing itself to the flow of rational authority through the social-historical institutions in which it finds itself. If it does not throw itself into the doubling and reduplication of the social milieu, it will find itself claiming ultimate epistemic authority at the same time that it acknowledges its own contingency and fallibility.

## NOTES

1. Jean Hyppolite, *Genèse et structure de la Phénoménologie de Hegel*, 2 vols. (Paris: Aubier, 1946); *Genesis and Structure of Hegel's Phenomenology of Spirit*, trans. S. Cherniak and J. Heckman (Evanston, Ill.: Northwestern University Press, 1974).

2. The two subtitles are "Science of the Experience of Consciousness" and "System of Science: The First Part." Scholars have spoken of the book's different purposes, either effecting a "transcendental-psychological proof" of absolute cognition or a "historical proof" theory. For a manageable discussion of these topics, see H. S. Harris, *Hegel's Ladder*, vol. 1 (Indianapolis and Cambridge: Hackett, 1997), pp. 1, 9–12, 23.

3. See F. W. J. Schelling, *Presentation of My System*, trans. Michael Vater, in *Philosophical Forum* 32, no. 4 (winter 2001): 339–71.

4. Harris suggests that the preface ("On Scientific Cognition") serves as an "introduction" to the whole Science of Philosophy (or the 'system'), and thus justifies one of the *Phenomenology's* subtitles (*Hegel's Ladder*, vol. 1, p. 30).

5. See F. W. J. Schelling, *Further Presentations from the System of Philosophy*, § II "Intellectual Intuition" and § IV "Construction in Philosophy," trans. Michael Vater in *Philosophical Forum* 32, no. 4 (winter 2001): 372–97.

6. Paul Cobben makes a similar move, suggesting that when one examines the evolution of self-consciousness from the stage of ethical substance to that of self-conscious spirit, one is in fact traversing the same ground that Hegel covers abstractly in his systematic *Logic*. Vater, too, suggests that moral, social, and religious phenomena provide a key to reading the *Phenomenology*, whose structure may be hinted at in the verbal echoes that connect the disparate chapters *Gewissheit*, *Gewissen*, *Wissen* (Certainty, Conscience, Knowing).

# I REASON, TRUTH, AND HISTORY

## *The Early Hegel's Philosophy of History*<sup>1</sup>

HOLGER ZABOROWSKI

### I. HEGEL AND THE CRISIS OF THE PHILOSOPHY OF HISTORY

**T**he philosophy of history is in a crisis. Herta Nagl-Docekal has emphatically asked whether a philosophy of history is still possible today.<sup>2</sup> This very question signifies the problematic status of any philosophical approach to history which aims at understanding and illuminating the development of history. In this chapter, I will investigate the reason for the crisis of the philosophy of history and examine how this crisis is related to Hegel's thought. I will first provide an outline of three different attitudes toward a philosophical understanding of the meaning of history and show how they relate to Hegel's thought (I). Whether or not the crisis of the philosophy of history is rooted in Hegel's philosophy or in some caricature of Hegel's philosophy can only be determined on the basis of a thorough examination of Hegel's view of history and its development.

The following discussion will therefore focus on Hegel's early reflections on history and will inquire when and how Hegel discovered and elaborated the notion of historicity (*Geschichtlichkeit*)<sup>3</sup> and of the dialectical process of history. There is of course a controversy as to whether Hegel is to be credited for placing crucial emphasis on the concept of history. I am proposing that the discovery of historicity is not a post- and anti-Hegelian novelty of late nineteenth-century thinkers, but that Hegel has in fact taken history into account.<sup>4</sup>

I shall proceed by a close reading and a precise analysis of some key texts. In doing this, I shall focus on Hegel's consideration of the history of philosophy rather than on his lectures on the history of the world, however interesting an analysis of those lectures, their development, and their place within Hegel's *oeuvre* might be. Due to the limits of this chapter and its aim to focus upon the main stages of Hegel's philosophical appreciation of history, I shall also refrain from engaging in a discussion of Hegel's early theological writings.<sup>5</sup> This focus is justifiable in the sense that the history of philosophy is for Hegel the most advanced expression of the *Weltgeist*. Of primary interest will be the *Difference Essay*<sup>6</sup> (II) and *Faith and Knowledge*<sup>7</sup> (III); a final look at the *Phenomenology of Spirit*<sup>8</sup> will further clarify the main shifts in Hegel's understanding of history (IV).

Hegel's view of history, I would like to argue, develops from Platonism to historicism and a dialectical view of history. Particularly in the *Difference Essay*, philosophy of history is not yet wholly embedded in Hegel's dialectical method.<sup>9</sup> While the *Difference Essay* mixes two different understandings of truth and its relation to history which appear difficult to reconcile, *Faith and Knowledge* provides a more elaborate theory of the dialectical process of philosophy. This theory is the basis for the understanding of history in the *Phenomenology* in which the "self-meditation of the Idea through time and through the *contretemps* of history is the essential dynamic principle of the construction of the system."<sup>10</sup> The Platonic strand in Hegel, however, has not entirely vanished, since the whole historical process is about the unfolding of the Absolute Spirit. History itself unveils the Absolute which is to be achieved *through* history and not simply by overcoming history.

While Hegel is to be credited with the discovery of the idea of historicity and its significance for systematic philosophy, his understanding of history remains restricted to an idealist view of history that interprets the course of history on the basis of *a priori* principles. Thus, Hegel's view of history not only explains why the crisis of philosophy of history is related to Hegel's philosophy because of his problematic view of history: it also shows that, given Hegel's own intellectual development, he is also to be credited with a philosophical re-appreciation of history that overcomes an utterly ahistorical notion of truth and attempts to come to an adequate understanding of history and the historical development of philosophy.

Philosophy of history, I would like to argue, is not only still possible today, it is necessary for us to understand the course of history adequately. To this extent, our understanding will benefit from a close reading of Hegel's conception of history. Such a reading will demonstrate how the two dangers of the utter disregard for history and an utter relativization and pluralization of history can be bypassed—and how they must not be bypassed.

### Three Attitudes toward a Philosophical Understanding of the Meaning of History

There are three major reasons why advanced philosophical considerations on history seem outdated or unnecessary to a vast majority of philosophers. These three major attitudes toward a philosophical understanding of history can be interpreted as commentaries upon Hegel's philosophy of history, although it is difficult to say what Hegel's philosophy of history precisely is. As Robert B. Pippin states: "Hegel is one of the most lionized and most vilified philosophers of history, at the same time that it is widely believed that no one really knows what he was talking about."<sup>11</sup>

The first of these attitudes is the anti-Hegelian (and, of course, anti-Marxist) denial of a reconstructable and foreseeable process in human history which is subject either to the development of the Spirit (the idealist solution) or of human praxis (the materialist solution). Karl Popper's critique of Hegel's philosophy and of his disci-

ples' ideological anticipation of the future in the second volume of *The Open Society and Its Enemies*<sup>12</sup> needs to be mentioned here along with Ernst Topitsch's *Hegel's Sozialphilosophie als Heilslehre und Herrschaftsideologie*,<sup>13</sup> Ernst Cassirer's *The Myth of the State*,<sup>14</sup> and Friedrich Meinecke's *The German Catastrophe (Die deutsche Katastrophe)*.<sup>15</sup> One can also refer to other critiques of Hegel, such as those by Martin Heidegger and Theodor W. Adorno, Max Horkheimer, Walter Benjamin, Franz Rosenzweig,<sup>16</sup> and Emmanuel Levinas in their rejection of the universalizing and totalizing tendency in Hegel's interpretation of history.

It is obvious, therefore, that World Wars I and II were turning-points in the appreciation of Hegel, although there still remained an influential left- and right-wing Hegelianism. Herbert Marcuse published his study on *Hegel's Ontology and the Theory of Historicity*<sup>17</sup> in 1932 and Jean-Paul Sartre his *Critique de la Raison Dialectique*<sup>18</sup> in 1960. One also should not forget the German right-wing Hegelians and their critique of the Weimar Republic in the 1920s and 1930s. The two world wars mark both the decline of British Hegelianism and the gestation of existentialism and critical theory, both of which stand in a somewhat ambivalent relation to Hegel. Particularly after 1945, there was an increasing interest in Schelling, especially in his later philosophy, which was mainly due to Manfred Schröter's edition of the fragments of *The Ages of the World (System der Weltalter)* in 1946.<sup>19</sup> This distinctive shift signified, if not anti-Hegelianism, at least a thorough-going skepticism about a particular dimension of Hegel's philosophy since Schelling was one of the first and most substantial critics of Hegel and provided an idealist point of view that seemed to have overcome many of the shortcomings of Hegel's philosophy, particularly of his philosophy of history.

Schelling's *Of Human Freedom (Über das Wesen der menschlichen Freiheit)*<sup>20</sup> and his idea of the 'un-preconceivability' (*Unvordenklichkeit*) of Being<sup>21</sup> can be interpreted as a critique of Hegel's *Phenomenology* and, more precisely, of Hegel's understanding of history as outlined in his *Phenomenology*.<sup>22</sup> Schelling's *Philosophy of Revelation (Philosophie der Offenbarung)*<sup>23</sup> and his *Philosophy of Mythology (Philosophie der Mythologie)*<sup>24</sup> offer a more orthodox Christian account of the process of human history



than does Hegel. Taken together, this account strengthens the idea that the very 'existence' of being (as opposed to mere logical necessity and possibility) does not depend upon and is not subject to human reason. It emphasizes the intrinsic limits of merely rational (i.e., negative) philosophy. For Schelling, God as highest entity and first cause should be free and a person. He is the Lord of Being (*Herr des Seyns*) and hence of creation and history.

Hegel's notion of history as a procedural theodicy or cosmodicy<sup>25</sup> was thus the target of those philosophers who sensitively reassessed the nondeducible givenness of history, as Schelling did most explicitly, and its tragic and inexplicable dimension. Particularly vis-à-vis the course of twentieth-century history, one has ironically spoken of "history's unkind treatment of Hegel's hopes,"<sup>26</sup> and aimed at providing a sharp critique of Hegel's understanding of history and the individual's place within it. If Hegel is right in arguing that "Philosophy is system in development; the history of Philosophy is the same [namely, as the system in development],"<sup>27</sup> then there is, *from a systematic point of view*, really no place for the openness of the future, for prophecy, the otherness of the other, or the unjustifiable and unexplainable suffering of the objectified subjects of the historical process; for, as Karl Jasper has said of German idealism, idealism "loses all capacity for astonishment because it fancies itself in possession of absolute truth."<sup>28</sup>

The critique of Hegel, however, has frequently been overstated. In recent times, Robert L. Perkins, for instance, argues:

There is something terrifying in this lack of regard for the tragedy and horror which individuals themselves frequently have to face in history. To be sure, a philosophy of history may not be able to specify the whys and wherefores of every human tragedy and every criminal and brutal act. However, unless one can also explain the reverse, the sordid, barbaric, the pointless cruelties, one has not really come to grips with the realities of history in any empirical or experiential sense whatsoever. . . . Hegel, to be sure, attempts this explanation on some sort of grand scale, but he never involves himself in an explanation regarding an individual. This may testify to the bankruptcy of the whole goal and aim of the philosophy of history as conceived by Hegel.<sup>29</sup>

And yet, as Robert Spaemann has maintained, although considerations of history such as Hegel offers may be amoral as long as they proceed purely retrospectively and do not give orientation for human acting, they are not immoral.<sup>30</sup> It is important to note that Hegel himself refuses to predict the future. Accordingly, W. H. Walsh concedes: "I think it must be acknowledged that Hegel did tend to look at history in a retrospective way; this may be one reason why, despite his alleged 'historicism', he thinks it no part of his task to make predictions about the future. Hegel does not offer a diagnosis of the social situation which issues in a program for action."<sup>31</sup> So it is an important question whether the critics of Hegel do justice to Hegel or whether they rather target a particular stage in Hegel's development or a particular brand of 'Hegelianism' which bears little resemblance to Hegel's original philosophy. It seems that there will be an ongoing controversy over how Hegel's understanding of history ought to be interpreted. There are no simple answers to these questions concerning Hegel's philosophy of history.

We only need to mention briefly the two other attitudes toward the philosophical understanding of the meaning of history which are reflective of the crisis of the philosophy of history. There is the seemingly neo-Hegelian demand that history (and thus also the philosophy of history apart from the only conclusive one) must be considered as finished after the fall of Eastern Communism in the late 1980s, as Francis Fukuyama has argued.<sup>32</sup> However, his interpretation is quite questionable and presupposes a rather peculiar reading of Hegel and his philosophy of history as though Hegel considered liberal democracy the goal of history.

Finally, there is the postmodern idea that all 'metanarratives' about history, such as Hegel's—and his *Phenomenology* is indeed one of the most important modern accounts of how history can be conceived—are outmoded and are to be replaced by pluralistic philosophies beyond any universalizing and totalizing tendency. It is, however, easier to level such a criticism against the philosophy of history than to implement it. People continue to ask about 'the origin and goal of history' because "[h]istory for us," as Karl Jaspers has argued, "is the memory which is not only known to us, but from which we live."<sup>33</sup>

## Hegel's Philosophy of History

Hegel's philosophy of history is doubtless one of the most influential.<sup>34</sup> Later discussions of history invariably show a distinctly Hegelian or anti-Hegelian tendency, be it implicit or explicit. Yet it is interesting that contemporary research on Hegel's *Phenomenology of Spirit* has only to a very small extent focused on the philosophical meaning of history in the *Phenomenology*. It has mostly been interested in epistemological issues<sup>35</sup> and has thus constituted a politically neutral counter-reading to politically oriented, or sometimes *disoriented*, readings of Hegel. These latter approaches can be found throughout the whole history of Hegel scholarship, from Marxist futurology to the glorification of the post-1871 Bismarckian Prussia, and again in contemporary attempts such as Karl-Otto Apel's and Jürgen Habermas's reformulation of the Hegelian endeavor against the background of the linguistic pragmatic turn. Hegel's reflections on history are even more neglected, or even misinterpreted, although they express, as I will show, a view of history that belongs to the tradition of the Platonic<sup>36</sup> idea of truth's immediacy *beyond and in spite of* history (and yet inevitably also *in* history), as opposed to its progressive mediation *through* history.

However, it is important not to disregard Hegel's early view of history, not only because of the significance of the idea of history for his systematic philosophy, but also because of the development of his philosophy of history. Whoever wants to consider critically Hegel's later attempt to conceive of the historical process as the dialectical unfolding of the *Weltgeist* must take seriously Hegel's development toward a philosophical appreciation of history.<sup>37</sup> Thus, one may appreciate how Hegel strives to overcome an ahistorical Platonic understanding of truth by the idea of the genesis of a *Weltgeist*, which may or may not find its justification in empirical historical observation.

Arturo Massolo argues that for the young Hegel, the question of philosophy is the question of the problem of history;<sup>38</sup> he further claims that the genesis of Hegel's philosophy is the discovery that truth is nothing less than the conceptual (*begrifflich*) expression of historical reality.<sup>39</sup> This interpretation of Hegel's position, however,

needs to be modified. Hegel undoubtedly always was interested in history. However, this does not mean that Hegel's view of history remained unchanged. His philosophical point of departure is rather a Platonic disapproval of history than simply an interest in history and its dialectical development.<sup>40</sup> Tom Rockmore draws attention to the development of Hegel's historicism,

“[i]n *The Difference between Fichte's and Schelling's System of Philosophy* (= *Difference Essay*), Hegel's first philosophical publication, he argues that every philosophical theory can be understood from a historical perspective. Now (i.e., in the *Phenomenology*) drawing the consequences of that claim, he suggests the need to understand different philosophical views as partaking in a common enterprise, to which each belongs, on which they all depend, and in which they react to one another.<sup>41</sup>

To draw these conclusions also implies that Hegel modifies the Platonic underpinning of his early thought.

## 2. THE DIFFERENCE ESSAY

### Some Hegelian Accounts of the Development of Philosophy from Kant to Hegel<sup>42</sup>

In his *Difference Essay*, Hegel deals with the differences among Kant, Fichte, and Schelling. This is particularly interesting since later disciples and interpreters of Hegel have also offered commentaries upon the relation among Kant, Fichte, and Schelling and have included Hegel as the culmination point of this development while neglecting the work of both the later Fichte and the later Schelling. Manfred Riedel, for instance, interprets Hegel's endeavor as the fulfillment of the Copernican turn in the philosophy of history as initiated by Kant.<sup>43</sup> Two other examples<sup>44</sup> might aptly illustrate this typical schema of the development of German idealism. This interpretational schema, as I will show, finds its roots in Hegel's own account of the history of philosophy from his early writings onward.

The Hegelian Robert Adamson, who wrote the first English mono-

graph on Fichte, is quite modest about the role which Fichte played in the history of philosophy. He writes:

Nevertheless, Fichte's work as a philosopher was never, even for himself, a finished whole, and the permanent results of his activity have been absorbed in the more comprehensive elaboration of the Kantian principles which make up the philosophy of Hegel. It is not probable that Fichte's system, as a system, will ever discharge a more important function than that which has already been its work in the history of philosophy. It has made clear much that was obscure in Kant; it has contributed to give a wider range in the method of philosophy characteristic of the Kantian system, and it has served to effect the transition from Kant to Hegel.<sup>45</sup>

Kuno Fischer provides the following account of the development from Kant to Hegel:

There is no knowledge without categories or notions, which form it (Kant). There are no categories without self-consciousness, which produces them. There is no (productive) self-consciousness, unless it be absolute (Fichte). Self-consciousness is not absolute, unless spirit and nature be identical (Schelling). This identity (of reason) cannot be known, unless the self-conscious reason, i.e., spirit, be the single-minded (*einmüthige*) principle of the world (Hegel).<sup>46</sup>

### Hegel's View on the History of Philosophy in the *Difference Essay*

The *Difference Essay* (written between May and July 1801) was a very important treatise for Hegel's career as a philosopher. At that time, Hegel was comparatively unknown and he took the chance to shed some light on himself, thus characterizing his own career as a rising star and as the leading future philosopher. The *Difference Essay* enabled him to demonstrate his philosophical independence by illuminating the previously neglected and misrepresented differences between Fichte's and Schelling's philosophical systems, and also by presenting those of his own philosophical standpoints which were different from those of Schelling. However, Hegel's treatise was widely read as a defense of Schelling in the contemporary controversy

between Fichte and Schelling who was supposed to be Fichte's most faithful disciple. The *Difference Essay* was meant to be an in-depth critique of Reinhold's understanding of Schelling and Reinhold's own philosophical endeavor. Hegel's collaboration with Schelling in Jena in these years was undoubtedly very helpful for this work, since his insight into Schelling's system was based upon a much broader foundation than the insight of the general philosophical public.

At the beginning of the *Difference Essay* Hegel offers the rationale for his effort. The first paragraph is entitled "Historical view of philosophical systems"<sup>47</sup> and explains why philosophical systems can be interpreted historically:

No philosophical system can escape the possibility of this sort of reception; every philosophical system can be treated historically. As every living form belongs at the same time to the realm of appearance, so too does philosophy. As appearance, philosophy surrenders to the power capable of transforming it into dead opinion and into something that belonged to the past from the very beginning.<sup>48</sup>

Hegel asserts that philosophy is, among other things, a historical phenomenon. As a living form it belongs undeniably to two realms, one of which can be subjected to historical research. However, a historical approach cannot do justice to philosophy as a *living* phenomenon. In its objectifying tendency, it treats it as a past event, transforms it into a dead object of historical questions, and thus surrenders the *activity* of 'science' (*Wissenschaft*) for the *accumulation* of 'knowledge' (*Wissen*). Then, it can be examined according to the interest of the historian.<sup>49</sup> According to Hegel, this approach cannot come to grips with the essence of philosophy: "It matters little to the spirit that it is forced to augment the extant collection of mummies and the general heap of contingent oddities; for the spirit itself slipped away between the fingers of the curious collector of information."<sup>50</sup> Historical research is mainly concerned with the particular and with historical contingencies, and thus it cannot reach the level of the universal, of truth and real science; its main concern is not with truth. Hence, it simply cannot become philosophy.

For this reason, in the *Difference Essay*, Hegel not only refutes

Reinhold's opinion that Fichte's and Schelling's systems are substantially identical, but, more radically, he also rejects with astounding sharpness Reinhold's view of history, that is to say, his teleological idea of how the history of philosophy proceeds.

But the exercises are still supposed to prepare the way for the attempt that finally succeeds—for though we see that the shores of those philosophical Islands of the Blest that we yearn for are only littered with the hulks of wrecked ships, and there is no vessel safe at anchor in their bays, yet we must not let go the teleological perspective.<sup>51</sup>

According to Hegel, Reinhold misunderstands the purpose of the history of philosophy. For in Reinhold's view, it should merely enlighten contemporary debates and help to penetrate more deeply into the very spirit of philosophy: "Only if this sort of information concerning previous attempts to solve the problem of philosophy were available could the attempt actually succeed in the end—if mankind is fated to succeed in it at all."<sup>52</sup> This focus on the particular does not, however, lead Reinhold into the realm of general truth which is to be found beyond historical particularities because the very nature of philosophy, as Hegel sees it, is not capable of comprehending particularities.<sup>53</sup> All the peculiarities and contingencies "in the interesting individuality which is the organic shape that Reason has built for itself out of the material of a particular age"<sup>54</sup> are to be overcome. This is why, according to Hegel, philosophy should not be (and, as far as true philosophy is concerned, cannot be) original, as the Romantics expected it to be.<sup>55</sup>

Hegel cannot but question Reinhold's progress-oriented and almost instrumentalist approach to the history of philosophy which, as it were, presupposes a resemblance between philosophy and crafts—as if philosophy could progressively be improved as crafts certainly can.<sup>56</sup> Reinhold misconstrues, Hegel argues, the very essence of lively speculation and Reason (*Vernunft*) and their specific relation to a particular historical setting. Philosophy is, in Hegel's view, not a kind of technique which can easily be improved, or finally be accomplished by an ultimate improvement. If this were the case, the history of philosophy would provide only exercises without their own value

independent of the all-embracing process and its culmination point: "The preceding philosophical systems would at all times be nothing but practice studies for the big brains."<sup>57</sup>

Hegel's critique is deeply rooted in a Platonic understanding of truth. The following remark of Hegel strongly questions the Enlightenment optimism about a teleological interpretation of the past, present, and future of philosophy and of the progressive unfolding of truth. It indicates that Hegel's philosophy is already in the *Difference Essay* a philosophy of the absolute while the idea of history and its teleological unfolding is not yet elaborated.

But if the Absolute, like Reason which is its appearance, is eternally one and the same—as indeed it is—then every Reason that is directed toward itself and comes to recognize itself produces a true philosophy and solves for itself the problem which, like its solution, is at all times the same.<sup>58</sup>

That is why Hegel can conclude that there is a particular accomplishment inherent in all true speculative philosophy, or, conversely, that philosophy is only truly philosophy if this accomplishment is achieved. Plato and Spinoza in particular achieved this in Hegel's view. This is the reason why "with respect to the inner essence of philosophy there are neither predecessors nor successors."<sup>59</sup>

Every philosophy is complete in itself, and like an authentic work of art, carries the totality within itself. Just as the works of Apelles or Sophocles would not have appeared to Raphael and Shakespeare—had they known them—as mere preparatory studies, but as a kindred force of the spirit, so Reason cannot regard its former shapes as merely useful preludes to itself.<sup>60</sup>

Reason (*Vernunft*) is not rooted in particularities and contingencies. What belongs to the essence of philosophy (as opposed to its historical form) is, according to Hegel, eternally true. Therefore, Reason should focus on itself and not on the manifold and historically conditioned appearances of different philosophical endeavors: "For Reason, finding consciousness caught in particularities, only becomes philo-



sophical speculation by raising itself to itself, putting its trust only in itself and the Absolute which at that moment becomes its object.”<sup>61</sup>

### Hegel's Critique of Fichte's *Wissenschaftslehre*<sup>62</sup>

In the preface to the *Difference Essay*, Hegel also develops a critique of Fichte's *Science of Knowledge* (*Wissenschaftslehre*) that illustrates compellingly another important feature of Hegel's understanding of the history of philosophy in the *Difference Essay*. Fichte's 1794 *Science of Knowledge* is, as Fichte points out, a “pragmatic history of the human mind”<sup>63</sup> because it provides an account of the transcendental history of reality. Precisely from the tension-filled relationship between the I and the non-I as the ultimate basis for reality,<sup>64</sup> what Fichte calls “genuine life” can be deduced:

According to the account just put forward, the principle of life and consciousness, the ground of its possibility—is admittedly contained in the self; but this gives rise to no genuine life, no empirical existence in time; and any other kind, for us, is absolutely unthinkable. If such a genuine life is to be possible, we need for the purpose another and special sort of check to the self on the part of a not-self.<sup>65</sup>

Hegel, however, is critical of this Fichtean idea of how “genuine life” and thus also history can be deduced from the three main principles of the *Science of Knowledge*. According to Hegel, Fichte's subjective idealism fails to establish “the pure concept of Reason and of speculation” without an intrinsic finitization (and historization) of Reason (*Vernunft*). As Hegel sees it, Fichte's philosophy has unquestionably separated the Kantian spirit from its letter,<sup>66</sup> although it did not go far enough.

The principle, the Subject-Object, turns out to be a subjective Subject-Object. What is deduced from it thereby gets the form of a conditioning of pure consciousness, of the Ego = Ego; and pure consciousness itself takes on the form of something conditioned by an objective infinity, namely the temporal progression *ad infinitum*. Transcendental intuition loses itself in this infinite progression and

the Ego fails to constitute itself as absolute self-intuition. Hence, Ego = Ego is transformed into the principle 'Ego *ought* to be equal to Ego', Reason is placed in absolute opposition, i.e., it is degraded to the level of intellect, and it is this degraded Reason that becomes the principle of the shapes that the Absolute must give itself, and of the Sciences of these shapes.<sup>67</sup>

Fichte's insight into the identity of subject and object in what he calls the *Thatandlung* of the self-positing Ego can in Hegel's view not be interpreted merely in terms of its subjective and progressive side. There must also be an objective side of this identity and "something higher" than the subject and the object which, as it were, is the basis for Schelling's objective idealism. Schelling thus did justice to the reality of nature, for he "sets the objective Subject-Object beside the subjective Subject-Object and presents both as united in something higher than the subject."<sup>68</sup>

It is Hegel's own account of the relation between Fichte and Schelling that makes it necessary to supplement the account of Hegel's understanding of history as provided in the beginning. There is unquestionably a Platonic approach to truth in the *Difference Essay*, particularly in the theoretical chapter on the "Historical View of Philosophical Systems." Hegel does indeed rediscover the notion of a *philosophia perennis* through his claim that truth, that is to say, the Absolute, is beyond history, and that philosophy as concerned with the Absolute does not depend upon the particularities of history. He refuses to categorize all previous philosophical attempts as exercises that have a subordinate role for philosophers who are born later. However, his examination of modern philosophy, particularly of the differences between Fichte and Schelling, already presupposes the notion of some kind of historical development of philosophy that makes it possible to speak of "needs" within the course of the history of philosophy. He writes, for instance, that "[t]he Kantian philosophy needed to have its spirit distinguished from its letter";<sup>69</sup> he also speaks of the "need of the times"<sup>70</sup> or of the "need of a philosophy that will recompense nature for the mishandling that it suffered in Kant's and Fichte's systems."<sup>71</sup> Accordingly, he examines in one introductory chapter<sup>72</sup> the need for philosophy.

H. S. Harris has aptly summarized the descending line from Schelling to Reinhold and thus how philosophy 'necessarily' developed toward Schelling's philosophy, as the early Hegel viewed it.

Schelling knows what speculative philosophy is, and sees how it has to be done in the light of Kant's critical attack; Fichte knows what it must do, but not how to do it; Kant knows what it must do, and thinks he has proved that the task is impossible; Reinhold and Bardili do not even know what the real task of speculation is, and only aim to produce an imitation of it ('popular' or 'formula' philosophy) which is more to the taste of the general public.<sup>73</sup>

Hegel will later amend this descending line and state his critique of Schelling's philosophy of identity more explicitly. In the *Phenomenology*, he will elaborate upon his dialectical view of history and make clear from whose speculative system this descending line takes its starting point.

### Hegel's Understanding of the History of Philosophy in Comparison to Herder's Understanding of History

While there is a history of human techniques which belongs *essentially* to those techniques, as Hegel affirmed in 1801, there is a history of philosophy which only accidentally belongs to philosophy, since history is the appearance of the particular. We have seen that philosophy's main concern is in Hegel's view the eternal that is independent of any historical contingency whatsoever. Hegel argues in this early period that truth is not revealed progressively by means of a historical development, although philosophy can also be interpreted historically and also exhibits some kind of historical development. But real philosophy as science is about what is to be found *beyond* history. Therefore, we must transcend the history *in* history toward the Absolute and dispose of the particular features of philosophy since they are merely unavoidable obstacles on humanity's search for truth.

As far as this Platonic feature of the early Hegel's thought is concerned, his point of view is apparently less akin to the Enlightenment understanding of the historical process than to the counter-Enlightenment view of Johann Gottfried Herder, for instance.<sup>74</sup> In his volu-

minous *Ideas toward a Philosophy of the History of Mankind* (*Ideen zur Philosophie der Geschichte der Menschheit*), Herder expounds a view of history that is close to Hegel's.

Herder decisively draws attention to the importance of one's own standpoint (in a hermeneutic way) and to the relation between the particular and the eternal truth which is revealed in it. He thus investigates the particular more deeply than Hegel and overcomes his somewhat Eurocentric perspective: despite his emphasis upon a continuous development of history, Herder concedes that the differences between primitive and enlightened people are not specific differences and do not allow for cultural bias.

If we regard the concept of culture as found in Europe to be fundamental, we will find 'Culture' only in Europe. If we go so far as to establish arbitrary distinctions between 'Culture' and Enlightenment, neither of which, if they are of the right kind, can exist without the other, we will be even further from getting our heads out of the clouds. If, however, we keep our feet on the ground and observe as widely as possible the development (*Bildung*) of humanity revealed by nature herself, who ought to have known best the purpose and character of her creatures, we see that this development (*Bildung*) of humanity is none other than the tradition of education toward some form or other of human happiness and a way of life.<sup>75</sup>

In the following passage, Herder justifies his understanding of tradition and of the differences between different cultures theologically. Insofar as God creates each phenomenon, it is characterized by a wholeness which, although it belongs to the whole of creation, constitutes an immediacy to its creator. Truth, or immediacy to God, does not depend on a phenomenon's historical setting. While Hegel argued that "every philosophy is complete in itself" and thus mainly rebutted a historicist view of the history of philosophy, Herder goes so far as to include "all works of God":

All works of God are characterized by the fact that, although all belong to one ungraspable whole, each forms a whole in itself and is imbued with the divine nature of its destiny. This is the case with plants and animals. Should it be different with humans and their destiny?<sup>76</sup>

### 3. HEGEL'S UNDERSTANDING OF HISTORY IN FAITH AND KNOWLEDGE

In the July 1802 issue of the *Critical Journal of Philosophy* (*Kritisches Journal der Philosophie*), Hegel contributed once more to the ongoing philosophical debate of the early nineteenth century with his treatise *Faith and Knowledge* (*Glauben und Wissen*).<sup>77</sup> This work deals with the Kantian, Jacobian, and Fichtean philosophy, but interestingly does not draw decisive attention to Schelling's thought and how this fits into the provided account.<sup>78</sup> Hegel's treatise is a substantial critique of Kant's, Jacobi's, and Fichte's philosophy and hints in many ways at the *Phenomenology*. For Hegel, all three have thoroughly underestimated Reason (*Vernunft*) and its potencies by limiting and reducing it, indeed by opposing it to faith. All of them declared God to be inconceivably beyond the limits of Reason.<sup>79</sup> The traditional contradistinction between Reason and faith, between philosophy and positive religion, can, as Hegel holds, ironically now be found within philosophy itself. Religion and faith are deeply rationalized and governed by the laws of reasoning, while philosophy, in Hegel's view, has subjected itself to faith. However, this faith is not the faith of religion as opposed to natural reason, but a faith *within* philosophy itself. Hegel thus seems to be one of the first to speak, albeit implicitly, of a dialectic of Enlightenment. In his view, Reason has not yet overcome its counterpart, but is still governed by it:

Reason had already gone to seed in and for itself when it envisaged religion merely as something positive and not idealistically. And after its battle with religion the best that Reason could manage was to take a look at itself and come to self-awareness. Reason, having in this way become mere intellect, acknowledges its own nothingness by placing that which is better than it in a *faith outside and above itself*, as a *beyond* [to be believed in]. This is what has happened in the *philosophies of Kant, Jacobi, and Fichte*. Philosophy has made itself the handmaid of a faith once more.<sup>80</sup>

In *Faith and Knowledge*, Hegel criticizes the dogmatism of the Enlightenment and of the counter-Enlightenment. He questions the

absolutization of the empirical and the finite as well as the differentiation between Reason and the Absolute that is inherent in Kant's, Jacobi's, and Fichte's thought. The metaphysics of subjectivity has, according to Hegel, replaced the former metaphysics of objectivity.

In spite of the striking differences among Kant, Jacobi, and Fichte, all three of them remain in Hegel's view in the sphere of the finite and have not yet thought through the very genesis of the Absolute, which is why their philosophies are a mixture of empiricism, idealism, and skepticism. Consequently, they have not yet approached the idea (*Idee*) as the identity of both the finite and the infinite. The very existence or nonexistence of Reason is at stake as long as the dichotomy of Reason and faith is not questioned and abandoned. It is, according to Hegel, precisely the underlying move toward anthropology in Kant's, Jacobi's, and Fichte's writings and their incapacity to unite philosophical concept and the intuition of the eternal that needs to be overcome. Despite the differences, there is in these philosophies

a culture of ordinary human intellect which does, to be sure, rise to the thinking of a universal; but because it remains ordinary intellect it takes the infinite concept to be absolute thought and keeps what remains of its intuition of the eternal strictly isolated from the infinite concept. It does so either by renouncing that intuition altogether and sticking to concept and experience, or by keeping both [intuition and concept] although unable to unite them—for it can neither take up its intuition into the concept, nor yet nullify both concept and experience [in intuition].<sup>81</sup>

There is, however, in Hegel's account a particular relationship between Kant's, Jacobi's, and Fichte's philosophies. They are not merely different reformulations of traditional dogmatism, but the only three possible ways of a metaphysics of subjectivity that can be interpreted as a continuation of old dogmatism and metaphysics.

First of all, Kantian criticism exhibits the objective side of this subjective-idealist dogmatism. Kant reduces philosophy to the knowledge of subjectivity, or the epistemological critique of human cognitive faculties (*Erkenntnisvermögen*). He is not concerned with the

knowledge of the Absolute as such, but with a merely postulated ideality that belongs to the realm of practical Reason: "The absolute concept, existing strictly for itself as practical Reason, is the highest objectivity within the finite realm, and it is absolute as ideality postulated in and for itself."<sup>82</sup>

Secondly, Jacobi's thought appears very close to Kant's because it is also committed to absolute finitude, be it ideally as formal knowledge or really as absolute empiricism. Jacobi integrates these two strands, in Hegel's view, by introducing the notion of an utterly world-transcending 'faith'. The actual difference between Jacobi and Kant is that Jacobi's thought shows the subjective side of the new dogmatism. His philosophy then must be understood as a counter-philosophy to Kant's: "It transposes the antithesis and the identity, postulated as absolute, into the subjectivity of feeling, into infinite longing and incurable grief."<sup>83</sup>

Finally, Fichte's subjective idealism, Hegel holds, synthesizes Kant's and Jacobi's thought. Hegel stresses that there is a proximity between Fichte and Jacobi, a theme stressed by Fichte himself in a letter which he wrote to Jacobi in 1795.<sup>84</sup> There is, according to Hegel, also an affinity between Fichte's and Kant's philosophies because Fichte's thought "demands the form of objectivity and of basic principles as in Kant, but it posits at the same time the conflict of this pure objectivity with the subjectivity as a longing and a subjective identity."<sup>85</sup>

Hegel classifies the philosophical endeavors of Kant, Jacobi, and Fichte as individualistic and based upon the "principle of the North." It is still tied up with Enlightenment eudaimonism and with the "beautiful subjectivity of Protestantism."<sup>86</sup> This "principle of the North" is a particular form of the *Weltgeist*:<sup>87</sup>

The great form of the world spirit that has come to cognizance of itself in these philosophies, is the principle of the North, and from the religious point of view, of Protestantism. This principle is subjectivity for which beauty and truth present themselves in feelings and persuasions, in love and intellect.<sup>88</sup>

So Hegel places the philosophies of Kant, Jacobi, and Fichte into the overall dialectical development of the *Weltgeist*. These philosophies

show, in Hegel's view, an "empirical necessity."<sup>89</sup> In their particular inconsistencies and inadequacies, they are empirically necessary and closely interrelated steps of the *Weltgeist's* progressive and dialectical development. Their standpoints are fixed for philosophy by the "all-powerful culture of our time".<sup>90</sup>

In general, imperfect philosophies immediately pertain to [i.e., arise from] an empirical necessity just because they are imperfect. So it is through and in this empirical necessity that their imperfect aspect is to be comprehended. The empirical is what is there in the world as ordinary existence (*Wirklichkeit*). In empirical philosophies it is present in conceptual form, as one with consciousness, and therefore justified.<sup>91</sup>

This notion of empirical historical necessity, of an "absolute and blind natural necessity,"<sup>92</sup> can also be found in the following remark on the history of philosophy, which apparently alludes to biblical language and anticipates Hegel's more advanced view of history and its dialectical development as proposed in the *Phenomenology*:

When the time had come, the infinite longing that yearns beyond body and world, reconciled itself with existence. But the reality, with which it became reconciled, the objective sphere acknowledged by subjectivity, was in fact merely empirical existence, the ordinary world and ordinary matters of fact (*Wirklichkeit*). Hence, this reconciliation did not itself lose the character of absolute opposition implicit in beautiful longing. Rather, it flung itself upon the other pole of the antithesis, the empirical world.<sup>93</sup>

In *Faith and Knowledge*, Hegel, therefore, interprets Kant's, Jacobi's, and Fichte's philosophies from a historical and dialectical point of view; that is to say, he is interested in the presuppositions of particular philosophical systems and in how one should dialectically relate them to one another (as thesis, antithesis, and synthesis) and to the whole history of ideas. The major presupposition of philosophical systems is the expression of the *Weltgeist*. This historical point of view is closely associated with a systematic claim. Despite the relativizing impact of his historical standpoint, Hegel still upholds a rather ahistorical notion of what phi-



losophy is really all about. For there is a true and real philosophy that makes it possible to comprehend the deficiencies of philosophical dogmatism and will eventually overcome its dichotomization of concept and intuition in a philosophy of the Absolute.

*Faith and Knowledge* does not yet sufficiently clarify what this philosophy will look like—and who is to develop it. It is uncontentious to argue that Hegel himself tried to elaborate upon a philosophy that overcomes the dogmatism of Kant, Jacobi, and Fichte and bridges the gap between concept (*Begriff*) and intuition (*Anschauung*). This is supposed to be the consummation of Kantian criticism, Jacobian scepticism and fideism, and Fichtean subjective idealism, all of which lead to negative theology<sup>94</sup> and, as Hegel would put it, to a peculiar preoccupation with practical reason. This philosophy, then, cannot be historically relativized because it is the final result of the dialectical process of history. “[T]rue philosophy,” as Hegel states, “should emerge out of this [completed] culture, nullify the absoluteness of its finitudes and present itself.” This philosophy presents itself “all at once as perfected appearance.”<sup>95</sup> Because of the dialectical development of the history of philosophy, the historical Good Friday is to be reestablished ahistorically and speculatively “since the [more] serene, less well grounded, and more individual style of the dogmatic philosophies and of the natural religions must vanish, the highest totality can and must achieve its resurrection solely from this harsh consciousness of loss, encompassing everything, and ascending in all its earnestness and out of its deepest ground to the most serene freedom of its shape.”<sup>96</sup>

#### 4. HEGEL'S UNDERSTANDING OF HISTORY IN THE PHENOMENOLOGY OF SPIRIT

This point of view is unquestionably close to Hegel's more elaborate understanding of the history of philosophy in the *Phenomenology*, where he characterizes the history of philosophy as a “slow-moving succession of Spirits,” “a gallery of images, each of which, endowed

with all the riches of Spirit, moves thus slowly just because the Self has to penetrate and digest this entire wealth of its substance."<sup>97</sup> There is also a distinct development in this succession of spirits:

The realm of Spirits which is formed in this way in the outer world constitutes a succession in Time in which one Spirit relieved another of its charge and each took over the empire of the world from its predecessor. Their goal is the revelation of the depth of Spirit, and this is *the absolute Notion*. This revelation is, therefore, the raising-up of its depth, or its *extension*, the negativity of this withdrawn 'I', a negativity which is its externalization or its substance; and this revelation is also the Notion's Time, in that this externalization is in its own self externalized, and just as it is in its extension, so it is equally in its depth, in the Self. The goal, *Absolute* Knowing, or Spirit that knows itself as Spirit, has for its path the recollection of the Spirits as they are in themselves and as they accomplish the organization of their realm.<sup>98</sup>

Hegel's philosophy of history as proposed in the *Phenomenology* is reminiscent of Reinhold's teleological view of history and closely related to his critique of Schelling's philosophy. Hegel's critique of Schelling became increasingly radical in the years following the cessation of the *Critical Journal* and culminates in the polemical invective against Schelling in the preface to the *Phenomenology*: "To pit this single insight, that in the Absolute everything is the same, against the full body of articulated cognition, which at least seeks and demands such fulfillment, to palm off its Absolute as the night in which, as the saying goes, all cows are black—this is cognition naively reduced to vacuity."<sup>99</sup> One can even interpret the whole endeavor of the *Phenomenology* as a critique of Schelling's idealist philosophy and, as Hegel has it, its disregard for the historical dimension of cognition and thus also of the Absolute. Hegel therefore accuses Schelling, in a passage that has become famous, of a "rapturous enthusiasm which, like a shot from a pistol, begins straight away with absolute knowledge, and makes short work of other standpoints by declaring that it takes no notice of them."<sup>100</sup> The alternative that Hegel proposes to this "enthusiasm" and this reduction of cognition to vacuity lies par-

ticularly in his philosophy of history which does not “begin straight away with absolute knowledge,” but provides an account of the historical genesis of the absolute spirit as conceived of from an a priori point of view.

It is obvious from what we have already said about the early Hegel's view of history that his criticism of Schelling is also a criticism of his own earlier philosophy. In the *Difference Essay*, as I have argued, Hegel supported an ahistorical notion of the Absolute that betrays Schelling's influence. He expounds his theory of the Absolute in words which are similar to those that he would later use in his critique of Schelling:

The Absolute is the night, and the light is younger than it; and the distinction between them, like the emergence of the light out of the night, is an absolute difference—the nothing is the first out of which all being, all the manifoldness of the finite has emerged.<sup>101</sup>

In this early work, the Absolute is the goal for which philosophy strives; it is, however, already present—because it would be unreasonable to strive for something which does not exist and can therefore never be achieved—and is thus one of the two presuppositions of philosophy. The other presupposition of philosophy is the differentiation into concept (*Begriff*) and being, or into finitude and infinity. The main task of philosophy is to unify those two presuppositions. This means to unify being and not-being in becoming as their appearance or, in other words, to unify the finite and the infinite in life.<sup>102</sup>

This understanding of the task of philosophy endorses once again our interpretation of Hegel's very early view of history as alien to the very task of philosophy. The idea that the Absolute is already present and the notions of ‘becoming’ and ‘life,’ however, already point ahead to Hegel's later understanding of truth as that which is to be revealed *in* and *through* history because it is already present *in* history.

The early Hegel's view on history and its significance has thus developed toward a more pronounced articulation of a dialectical view of history. In the *Phenomenology*, Hegel still presupposes an ahistorically eternal and absolute truth. However, history and its development is less ambiguously interpreted as constitutive for the becoming of

genuine knowledge. The *Phenomenology* deals with the “coming-to-be of *Science as such or of knowledge*. . . . In order to become genuine knowledge, to beget the element of Science which is the pure Notion of Science itself, it must travel a long way and work its passage.”<sup>103</sup> The Absolute is the goal of history in the course of which the “substance of the individual, the World-Spirit itself, has had the patience to pass through these shapes over the long passage of time, and to take upon itself the enormous labor of world-history.”<sup>104</sup> History, and particularly the history of philosophy, has thus become a constitutive feature of philosophy which also implies a more self-confident assessment of Hegel's own philosophy and its prominent and conclusive role in the history of philosophy.

While one can see that Hegel's interpretation of the “long way” and “passage” of knowledge—particularly his apriorism and his philosophical self-understanding—has aroused concern and critique, his attempt at understanding history ought not to be entirely disregarded. His philosophy shows that not only in order to understand itself, philosophy needs to consider history and the historical dimension of knowledge. Thus, his philosophy shows the problems of the philosophy of history and the need for it. It also remains a challenge in the crisis of the philosophy of history and in the imminent danger of newly disregarding the historical dimension of human existence.

## NOTES

1. I am deeply indebted to Professor Oliver O'Donovan, Professor Michael Vater, Dr. Alfred Denker, and Professor Michael Inwood for their most helpful comments on earlier versions of this chapter.

2. Herta Nagl-Docekal, “Ist Geschichtsphilosophie heute noch möglich?” in Herta Nagl-Docekal (ed.), *Der Sinn des Historischen. Geschichtsphilosophische Debatten* (Frankfurt am Main: Fischer, 1996) pp. 7–63.

3. This was a question particularly of 1960s research in the history of ideas. See Leonhard von Reuthe-Fink, *Geschichtlichkeit. Ihr terminologischer und begrifflicher Ursprung bei Hegel, Haym, Dilthey, und Yorck* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck and Rupprecht, 1964); Gerhard Bauer, *Geschichtlichkeit. Wege und Irrwege eines Begriffes* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 1963); G. Scholtz,

“Ergänzungen zur Herkunft des Wortes ‘Geschichtlichkeit,’” in *Archiv für Begriffsgeschichte* 14 (1970); Peter Hünermann, *Der Durchbruch geschichtlichen Denkens im 19. Jahrhundert: Johann Gustav Droysen, Wilhelm Dilthey, Graf Paul Yorck von Wartenburg. Ihr Weg und ihre Weisung für die Theologie* (Freiburg: Herder, 1967). I suggest adopting Marcuse’s definition: “Historicity is what defines history and thus distinguishes it from ‘nature’ or from the ‘economy,’ Historicity signifies the meaning we intend when we say of something that it is ‘historical.’ Historicity signifies the meaning of this ‘is,’ namely the meaning of the Being of the historical.” [Geschichtlichkeit ist der Titel für das, was Geschichte als ‘Geschichte’ bestimmt und abgrenzt (etwa gegen ‘Natur’ und ‘Wirtschaft’). Geschichtlichkeit bedeutet, den Sinn dessen, was wir meinen, wenn wir von etwas sagen: es ist geschichtlich—bedeutet den Sinn dieses ‘ist’: den Seinssinn des Geschichtlichen. Am Geschichtlichen wird damit Problem die Weise, in der es ist.]—Herbert Marcuse, *Hegels Ontologie und die Grundlage einer Theorie der Geschichtlichkeit* (Frankfurt am Main: Klostermann, 1932), p. 1.]

4. One could say that, to some extent, his early works are also characterized by an existentialist strand.

5. For the (dis)continuity of Hegel’s development, see Werner Hartkopf, *Kontinuität und Diskontinuität in Hegels Jenaer Anfängen. Studien zur Entwicklung der modernen Dialektik IV* (Königstein/Taunus: Forum Academicum, 1979).

6. Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, *Differenz des Fichte’schen und des Schelling’schen Systems der Philosophie in Beziehung auf Reinhold’s Beyträge zur leichtern Übersicht des Zustands der Philosophie zu Anfang des neunzehnten Jahrhunderts* (1801) (= Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, *Die Differenz des Fichteschen und Schellingschen Systems der Philosophie* (1801), in Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, *Gesammelte Werke. In Verbindung mit der Deutschen Forschungsgemeinschaft herausgegeben von der Nordrhein-Westfälischen Akademie der Wissenschaften*, Bd. 4 (*Jenaer Kritische Schriften*), ed. Hartmut Buchner and Otto Pöggeler (Hamburg: Meiner Verlag, 1968) [= Dif]); English translation: *The Difference between Fichte’s and Schelling’s System of Philosophy* by H. S. Harris and Walter Cerf (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1977) [= Difference].

7. Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, *Glauben und Wissen oder die Reflexionsphilosophie der Subjektivität in der Vollständigkeit ihrer Formen als Kantische, Jacobische, und Fichtesche Philosophie*, in *Gesammelte Werke. In Verbindung mit der Deutschen Forschungsgemeinschaft herausgegeben von der Nordrhein-Westfälischen Akademie der Wissenschaften*, Bd. 4 (*Jenaer Kritische Schriften*), ed.

Hartmut Buchner and Otto Pöggeler (Hamburg: Felix Meiner Verlag, 1968 [= GW]; English translation: *Faith and Knowledge*, trans. Walter Cerf and H. S. Harris (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1970) [= FK].

8. Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, *Phänomenologie des Geistes* ed. Wolfgang Bonsiepen and Reinhard Heede, in *Gesammelte Werke*, Bd. 9 (Hamburg: Felix Meiner, 1980) [= GW9]. English translation: *Phenomenology of Spirit*, trans. A. V. Miller, (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1977) [= ET].

9. Werner Flach, "Hegels Auffassung von der Geschichte der Philosophie und die Dialektik," in *Hegel-Jahrbuch* (1974): 444–51, provides a different account of Hegel's development. See especially p. 444.

10. Robert A. Caponigri, "The Pilgrimage of Truth through Time," in *Hegel and the History of Philosophy*, ed. Joseph J. O'Malley, Keith W. Algozin, and Frederick G. Weiss (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1974), p. 19.

11. Robert B. Pippin, *Hegel's Idealism. The Satisfactions of Self-Consciousness* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), p. 3.

12. Karl R. Popper, *The Open Society and Its Enemies* (London: Routledge, 1995).

13. Ernst Topitsch, *Hegels Sozialphilosophie als Heilslehre und Herrschaftsideologie* (Neuwied and Berlin: Hermann Luchterhand Verlag, 1967).

14. See, for instance, Ernst Cassirer, *The Myth of the State* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1961), p. 248f.

15. Friedrich Meinecke, *Die deutsche Katastrophe* (Wiesbaden: E. Brockhaus Verlag, 1946), pp. 28, 83; English translation: Friedrich Meinecke, *The German Catastrophe: Reflections and Recollections*, trans. Sidney Bradshaw Fay (Boston: Beacon Press, 1963).

16. Franz Rosenzweig finished his doctoral thesis, *Hegel und der Staat* (München and Berlin: R. Oldenbourg, 1920), supervised by Friedrich Meinecke, almost entirely before World War I; afterwards, he did not want to publish it until he was paid for the publication by the Heidelberger Akademie der Wissenschaften. In his 1919 preface, he underlines his skepticism even about his critical rereading of Hegel: "Ich weiß nicht, wo man heute noch den Mut hernehmen soll, deutsche Geschichte zu schreiben. . . . Ein Trümmerfeld bezeichnet den Ort, wo vormals das Reich war" [Vol. 1: Lebensstationen (1770–1806), p. xii].

17. Herbert Marcuse, *Hegels Ontologie und die Grundlage einer Theorie der Geschichtlichkeit* (Frankfurt am Main: Klostermann, 1932); English translation: *Hegel's Ontology and the Theory of Historicity*, trans. Seyla Benhabib (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1987).

18. Jean-Paul Sartre, *Critique de la Raison Dialectique* (Paris: Gallimard, 1960).

19. This increasing interest was also due to Martin Heidegger's and Karl Jaspers's interest in Schelling; there is a distinctly theological interest in Schelling as well: two Catholic theologians who were to become bishops, Walter Kasper, *Das Absolute in der Geschichte. Philosophie, und Theologie der Geschichte in der Spätphilosophie Schellings* (Mainz: Matthias Grünewald, 1965), and Klaus Hemmerle, *Gott und das Denken nach Schellings Spätphilosophie* (Freiburg: Herder, 1968), wrote their *Habilitation* theses on the later Schelling. For the theological interest in Schelling, see also Paul Tillich, *Main Works*, ed. Carl Heinz Ratschow, vol. 1: *Philosophical Writings*, ed. Gunther Wenz (Berlin and New York: De Gruyter-Evangelisches Verlagswerk, 1989), particularly pp. 21–112 and 391–402.

20. Friedrich Wilhelm Joseph Schelling, *Sämmtliche Werke*, ed. K. F. A. Schelling (Stuttgart 1856–61), Bd. 7, pp. 331–416; for a most helpful commentary, see the new edition by Thomas Buchheim: F. W. J. Schelling, *Philosophische Untersuchung über das Wesen der menschlichen Freiheit und die damit zusammenhängenden Gegenstände* (Hamburg: Meiner, 1997); for the English translation, see *Of Human Freedom: A Translation of F. W. J. Schelling's Philosophische Untersuchung über das Wesen der menschlichen Freiheit und die damit zusammenhängenden Gegenstände: with a Critical Introduction and Notes by J. Gutmann* (Chicago: Open Court Publishing Company, 1936).

21. For Schelling's notion of the unpreconceivability of being, see Alfred Denker, "Freiheit ist das höchste Gut des Menschen: Schellings erste Auseinandersetzung mit der Jenaer Wissenschaftslehre," in Christoph Asmuth (ed.), *Sein—Reflexion—Freiheit: Aspekte der Philosophie Johann Gottlieb Fichtes* (Amsterdam and Philadelphia: B. R. Grüner, 1997), pp. 35–68, especially p. 52. See also Walter Schulz, *Die Vollendung des deutschen Idealismus in der Spätphilosophie Schellings* (Stuttgart und Köln: Kohlhammer 1955), particularly p. 61f.

22. See Hans Michael Baumgartner, "Zur Einleitung: Übersicht, Aufbau, und Problemanzeige" (336–50), in Otfried Höffe and Annemarie Pieper (eds.), *F. W. J. Schelling: Über das Wesen der menschlichen Freiheit* (Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 1995), pp. 35–53, especially p. 36. For the development of the relation between Schelling and Hegel, see also Hermann Krings, *Die Entfremdung zwischen Schelling und Hegel (1801–1807)* (München: Verlag der Bayerischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, 1977).

23. Friedrich Wilhelm Joseph Schelling, *Philosophie der Offenbarung*, in

*Schellings Werke*. Nach der Originalausgabe in neuer Anordnung herausgegeben von Manfred Schröter, 6. Ergänzungsband (München: C. H. Beck'sche Verlagsbuchhandlung, 1960).

24. Friedrich Wilhelm Joseph Schelling, *Philosophie der Mythologie*, in *Schellings Werke*. Nach der Originalausgabe in neuer Anordnung herausgegeben von Manfred Schröter, 6. Hauptband (München: C. H. Beck'sche Verlagsbuchhandlung, 1928), pp. 255–387, and 5. Ergänzungsband (München: C. H. Beck'sche Verlagsbuchhandlung, 1959).

25. Ivan Soll, "Hegels Rechtfertigung der Geschichte," in *Hegel-Jahrbuch* 4 (1968/69): 81–88.

26. Merold Westphal, *History and Truth in Hegel's Phenomenology* (Atlantic Highlands, N.J.: Humanities Press, 1979), p. 226.

27. *Hegel's Lectures on the History of Philosophy*, trans. E. S. Haldane and Frances H. Simson (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1974 [reprint]), vol. 1, p. 29.

28. Karl Jaspers, *The Origin and Goal of History*, trans. Michael Bullock (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1953), p. 137.

29. Robert L. Perkins, "One Function of the Idea of Providence in Augustine's and Hegel's Historical Thought," in *Hegel-Jahrbuch* (1968/69): 421–36; for a comparison between Hegel and Augustine, see also the illuminating article by Juan Fernando Ortega Munos, "Vom Sinn der Geschichte bei Augustinus. In Auseinandersetzung mit Hegel und Marx," in *Edith Stein Jahrbuch*, vol. 4: Das Christentum, 1. Teil (Würzburg: Echter, 1998): 165–75. Both Perkins and Munos tend to overlook the fact that for Augustine, history is a deeply ambiguous phenomenon. This stress on history's ambiguity is of course quite different for Hegel; for a precise account of Augustine's political thought, see Oliver O'Donovan, "Augustine's City of God XIX and Western Political Thought," in *Dionysius* 9 (December 1987): 89–110.

30. Robert Spaemann, *Personen: Versuche über den Unterschied zwischen 'etwas' und 'jemand'* (Stuttgart: Klett-Cotta, 1996), p. 142.

31. W. H. Walsh, "Philosophy of History and Social Theory in Hegel," in *Hegel-Studien*, 27 (1992): 168, 178.

32. Francis Fukuyama, *The End of History and the Last Man* (London: Hamish Hamilton, 1992); a substantial critique and interpretation of Fukuyama's appraisal of Western liberal democracies is provided by Otto Pöggeler, *Ein Ende der Geschichte? Von Hegel zu Fukuyama* [= Vorträge der Nordrhein-Westfälischen Akademie der Wissenschaften 332] (Opladen: Westdeutscher Verlag, 1995).



33. Karl Jaspers, *The Origin and Goal of History*, p. 231 and particularly p. 229f.

34. See Klaus Düsing, *Hegel und die Geschichte der Philosophie: Ontologie und Dialektik in Antike und Neuzeit* (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1983); Robert A. Caponigri, in *Hegel and the History of Philosophy*, ed. Joseph J. O'Malley, Keith W. Algozin, and Frederick G. Weiss (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1974), pp. 1–20; Quentin Lauer, "Hegel as Historian of Philosophy," in *Hegel and the History of Philosophy*, pp. 21–46; W. H. Walsh, "Hegel on the History of Philosophy," in *The Historiography of the History of Philosophy (History and Theory, supplement 5, 1965)*, 67–82; Heinz Kimmerle, "Zum Verhältnis von Geschichte und Philosophie im Denken Hegels," in Heinz Kimmerle, *Das Problem der Abgeschlossenheit des Denkens* (Hegel-Studien, Beiheft 8, Bonn: Bouvier 1970): 301–12 [first published in *Hegel-Jahrbuch* (1968/69): 135–46]; Reinhart Klemens Maurer, *Hegel und das Ende der Geschichte: Interpretationen zur "Phänomenologie des Geistes"* (Stuttgart, Berlin, Köln, and Mainz: Kohlhammer, 1965); Lutz G. Geldsetzer, *Die Philosophie der Philosophiegeschichte im 19. Jahrhundert* (Meisenheim: Hain, 1968).

35. Sergio Dellavalle, "Jenseits aller Versöhnung. Zur Geschichtsphilosophie in Hegels Phänomenologie des Geistes als negativer Theodizee der absoluten Freiheit," in *Freiburger Zeitschrift für Philosophie und Theologie*, 42 (1995): 311.

36. Merold Westphal suggests calling the *Phenomenology's* understanding of history Platonic; but his immediate qualification demonstrates quite well (1) the problem intrinsically linked to this label and (2) why the *early* Hegel's philosophy could much more easily be named 'Platonism': "One may wish to call this Platonism, but it is evidently a very new kind of Platonism, for Absolute Knowledge consists in recollecting not the timeless, but above all the historical." See Merold Westphal, *History and Truth*, p. 225. On p. 44, Westphal calls Hegel's Platonism very controversially a biblical one: "In contrast to the Platonism of our contemporaries, his thought, at least on this point, can be described as biblical, for he finds history to be the medium for divine revelation. So rather than focusing on the timelessness which philosophy cannot have and should not seek, he directs us to the timelessness it can and should achieve if it is willing to think its present world rather than trying to be formaldehyde in which a passing form of life is preserved."

37. Frederick C. Beiser, "Hegel's Historicism," in Frederick C. Beiser (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to Hegel* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), pp. 270–300, also overlooks the development of Hegel's his-

toricism; Heinz Kimmerle ("Geschichte und Philosophie") states that in the *Difference Essay*, philosophy does not have a historical development. Kimmerle argues that the notion of a dialectical process of the history of philosophy can be found first in Hegel's 1805–1806 lectures on the history of philosophy. Maurer (*Hegel und das Ende der Geschichte*, p. 9), argues that Hegel's understanding of history in principle did not change between the *Difference Essay* and the subsequent lectures on the history of philosophy. For a critical discussion of Kimmerle's interpretation, see: Walter Chr. Zimmerli, "Geschichtsphilosophie und Philosophiegeschichte im Denken des jungen Hegel: Ansätze zu einer Theorie der Philosophiegeschichte," in *Natur und Geschichte*, ed. Kurt Hübner and Albert Menne (Hamburg: Meiner, 1973), pp. 470–79. Zimmerli argues that for Hegel, there is already a history of philosophy in the early Jena period and that the relationship between religion and history in Hegel's early writings hints at his later understanding of the relationship between philosophy and history of philosophy. See also Düsing, *Hegel und die Geschichte der Philosophie*, pp. 18–19: Düsing argues here that Hegel developed his first theory of the history of philosophy in the 1805–1806 lectures on the history of philosophy, for which there are neither manuscript nor lecture notes, only Rosenkranz's reference to it in *Hegel's Leben*; see also pp. 25–26.

38. Arturo Massolo, "Das Problem der Geschichte beim jungen Hegel," in *Hegel-Jahrbuch* (1961): 10.

39. *Ibid.*, p. 12.

40. Franz Hespe, in "'Die Geschichte ist der Fortschritt im Bewußtsein der Freiheit'. Zur Entwicklung von Hegels Philosophie der Geschichte," in *Hegel-Studien*, 26 (1991): 177–92, does not draw attention to the *Difference Essay* either. A most illuminating analysis of the development of Hegel's philosophy of history is given by Christoph Jamme in his essay, "Der Weltgeist bei der Entstehung der Geschichtsphilosophie des jungen Hegel," in *Hegel-Jahrbuch* (1983): 9–15.

41. Tom Rockmore, *Cognition: An Introduction to Hegel's Phenomenology of Spirit* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997), pp. 8–9.

42. The increase of interest in Schelling, mentioned earlier, revolutionary milestones such as Walter Schulze's *Die Vollendung des deutschen Idealismus in der Spätphilosophie Schellings*, and the edition of previously unpublished manuscripts of Schelling and Fichte led to a new view of the development of German idealist philosophy.

43. Manfred Riedel, "Die dialektische Begründung der Notwendigkeit des Fortschritts in Hegels Geschichtsphilosophie," in *Hegel-Jahrbuch* (1968/69): 97.

44. One could also mention Richard Kroner, *Von Kant bis Hegel*, 2 vols. (Tübingen: Mohr, 1921 and 1924).

45. Robert Adamson, *Fichte* (New York: Books of Libraries Press, 1969), p. 6.

46. Kuno Fischer, *Logik und Metaphysik oder Wissenschaftslehre* (Stuttgart 1952), pp. xiv–xv. “Es gibt keine Erkenntniß ohne Kategorien oder Begriffe, welche sie bilden (Kant). Es gibt keine Kategorien ohne ein Selbstbewußtseyn, welches sie producirt. Es gibt kein (productives) Selbstbewußtseyn, wenn es nicht absolut ist (Fichte). Das Selbstbewußtseyn ist nicht absolut, wenn nicht Geist und Natur identisch sind (Schelling). Diese Identität (die Vernunft) kann nicht gewußt werden, wenn nicht die selbstbewußte Vernunft, d.h. der Geist, das einmüthige Weltprincip bildet (Hegel)” (my translation).

47. Difference, pp. 85–86; “*Geschichtliche Ansicht philosophischer Systeme*” (Dif, pp. 9–10).

48. Difference, pp. 85–86; “Kein philosophisches System kann sich der Möglichkeit einer solchen Aufnahme entziehen; jedes ist fähig, geschichtlich behandelt zu werden. . . . Der lebendige Geist, der in einer Philosophie wohnt, verlangt, um sich zu enthüllen, durch einen verwandten Geist geboren zu werden. . . .” (Dif, p. 9).

49. Very interestingly, Martin Heidegger criticizes the professional philosophy in almost the same way: “Das Problem mag sich durch diese Art Geschichte der Philosophie, wie die Professoren sie treiben, an den Sachen vorbeiführen zu lassen, wir müssen aber lernen, auch da zum Wesentlichen vorzudringen, wo scheinbar nur noch die Phraseologie der Termini das Wort haben darf.” See Martin Heidegger, *Der deutsche Idealismus (Fichte, Schelling, Hegel) und die philosophische Problemlage der Gegenwart*, Gesamtausgabe, vol. 28 (Frankfurt am Main: Vittorio Klostermann, 1997), pp. 209–10. Heidegger, however, does not draw attention to the parallels between the early Hegel’s thought and his own philosophy despite his appreciation of Hegel in this lecture series.

50. Difference, p. 86; “. . . es kan ihm gleichgültig seyn, daß er dazu dienen muß, die übrige Kollektion von Mumien und den allgemeinen Haufen der Zufälligkeiten zu vergrößern, denn er selbst ist dem neugierigen Sammeln von Kenntnissen unter den Händen entflohen” (Dif, p. 9).

51. Difference, p. 87; “. . . dann ist es freilich möglich, überhaupt alle bisherigen Arten, die Aufgabe der Philosophie darzustellen und aufzulösen, mit Reinhold für weiter nichts als für Eigenthümlichkeiten und Vorübungen anzusehen, durch welche aber doch—weil, wenn wir auch die Küsten der

glückseeligen Inseln der Philosophie, wohin wir uns sehnen, nur mit Trümmern gescheiterter Schiffe bedeckt, und kein erhaltenes Fahrzeug in ihren Buchten erblicken, wir die teleologische Ansicht nicht fahren lassen dürfen, der gelingende Versuch vorbereitend herbeigeführt werde" (Dif, p. 11).

52. Difference, p. 86; ". . . nur durch eine solche Kenntniß der bisherigen vorüberhenden Versuche, die Aufgabe der Philosophie zu lösen, könne endlich der Versuch wirklich gelingen, wenn anders dieß Gelingen der Menschheit beschieden ist" (Dif, p. 10).

53. Difference, p. 88; "Das Wesen der Philosophie ist gerade bodenlos für Eigenthümlichkeiten" (Dif, p. 11). See also Eugen Fink, *Sein und Mensch: Vom Wesen der ontologischen Erfahrung*, ed. Egon Schütz and Franz-Anton Schwarz (Freiburg and Munich: Alber, 1977). On p. 79, Fink cites this passage and comments on it as follows: "Wir sind durch die Verführung des modernen Historismus gewohnt, Philosopheme als das 'Eigentum' eines großen Mannes, einer Epoche oder sonst eines bestimmten Menschentums anzusehen. Aber vielleicht ist Philosophie, ebenso wie Religion und Kunst, eine Weise, wie das menschliche Dasein dem Übermenschlichen gehört."

54. Difference, p. 88; "Das wahre Eigenthümliche einer Philosophie ist die interessante Individualität, in welcher die Vernunft aus dem Bauzeug eines besonderen Zeitalters sich eine Gestalt organisiert hat . . ." (Dif, p. 12).

55. Klaus Düsing, *Hegel und die Geschichte der Philosophie*, p. 16f.

56. Difference, p. 86; Dif, p. 10.

57. Difference, p. 87; ". . . und jeder Zeit wären allemal die bisherigen philosophischen Systeme für weiter nichts zu achten, als für Vorübungen großer Köpfe" (Dif, p. 10).

58. Difference, p. 87; "Wenn aber das Absolute wie seine Erscheinung die Vernunft, ewig ein und dasselbe ist, wie es denn ist; so hat jede Vernunft, die sich auf sich selbst gerichtet und sich erkannt hat, eine wahre Philosophie produziert, und sich die Aufgabe gelöst, welche, wie ihre Auflösung, zu allen Zeiten dieselbe ist" (Dif, p. 10).

59. Difference, p. 87; ". . . und in Rücksicht aufs innere Wesen der Philosophie gibt es weder Vorgänger noch Nachgänger" (Dif, p. 10).

60. Difference, p. 87; "Jede Philosophie ist in sich vollendet, und hat, wie ein ächtes Kunstwerk, die Totalität in sich. So wenig Apelles und Sophokles Werke, wenn Raffael und Shakespeare sie gekannt hätten, diesen als bloße Vorübungen für sich hätten erscheinen können—sondern als eine verwandte Kraft des Geistes—sowenig kann die Vernunft in frühern Gestaltungen ihrer selbst nur nützliche Vorübungen für sich erblicken" (Dif, p. 12).

61. Difference, p. 88; “. . . denn die Vernunft, die das Bewußtseyn in Besonderheiten befangen findet, wird allein dadurch zur philosophischen Spekulation, daß sie sich zu sich selbst erhebt, und allein sich selbst, und dem Absoluten, das zugleich ihr Gegenstand wird, sich anvertraut” (Dif, p. 12).

62. For a precise analysis of Hegel’s critique of Fichte in the *Difference Essay*, see Ludwig Siep, *Hegels Fichtekritik und die Wissenschaftslehre von 1804* (Freiburg and Munich: Alber, 1970), pp. 19–20; Helmut Girndt, *Die Differenz des Fichteschen und Hegelschen System in der Hegelschen Differenzschrift* (Bonn: Bouvier, 1965). Siep (p. 17) provides a short, yet convincing critique of the interpretation of Girndt, who claims to successfully defend even the 1794 *Wissenschaftslehre* against Hegel.

63. Johann Gottlieb Fichte, *Science of Knowledge (Wissenschaftslehre), with the First and Second Introductions*, ed. and trans. Peter Heath and John Lachs (New York: Appleton-Century-Croft, 1970), pp. 198–99: “Die Wissenschaftslehre soll sein eine pragmatische Geschichte des menschlichen Geistes”; Johann Gottlieb Fichte, *Grundlage der gesamten Wissenschaftslehre als Handschrift für seine Zuhörer (1794)*, in Johann Gottlieb Fichte’s *Sämmtliche Werke*. Herausgegeben von Immanuel Hermann Fichte, Bd. 1; Erste Abteilung, *Zur theoretischen Philosophie*, Erster Bd. (Berlin: deGruyter, 1965), pp. 83–328, especially p. 222.

64. Ibid., p. 245; “Der letzte Grund aller Wirklichkeit für das Ich ist demnach nach der Wissenschaftslehre eine ursprüngliche Wechselwirkung zwischen dem Ich und irgendeinem Etwas außer demselben, von welchem sich weiter nichts sagen läßt, als daß es dem Ich völlig entgegengesetzt sein muß” (*Grundlage*, p. 279).

65. Ibid., pp. 245–46; “Nach der soeben vorgenommenen Erörterung ist das Prinzip des Lebens und Bewußtseins, der Grund seiner Möglichkeit, allerdings im Ich enthalten, aber dadurch entsteht noch kein wirkliches Leben, kein empirisches Leben in der Zeit; und ein anderes ist für uns schlechterdings undenkbar. Soll ein solches wirkliches Leben möglich sein, so bedarf es dazu noch eines besonderen Anstoßes auf das Ich durch ein Nicht-Ich” (*Grundlage*, p. 279).

66. Difference, p. 80; Dif, p. 5.

67. Difference, p. 82; “. . . die Seite des Schellingschen Systems, von welcher dieses sich vom Fichte’schen unterscheidet, und dem subjektiven Subjektobjekt, das objektive Subjektobjekt in der Naturphilosophie entgegenstellt, und beyde in einem höhern, als das Subjekt ist, vereinigt darstellt” (Dif, p. 7).

68. Difference, pp. 81–82; “. . . das Princip, das Subjekt-Objekt

erweist sich als ein subjectives Subjekt-Objekt. Das aus ihm deducirte erhält hierdurch die Form einer Bedingung des reinen Bewußtseins, des Ich = Ich, und das reine Bewußtsein selbst die Form eines bedingten durch eine objektive Unendlichkeit, den Zeit-Progress in infinitum, in dem die transcendente Anschauung sich verliert und Ich nicht zur absoluten Selbstanschauung sich konstituiert, also Ich = Ich, sich in das Prinzip: Ich soll gleich Ich seyn, verwandelt. Die in die absolute Entgegensetzung gesetzte, also zum Verstand herabpotenzierte Vernunft wird somit Princip der Gestalten, die das Absolute sich geben muß, und ihrer Wissenschaften" (Dif, p. 7).

69. Difference, p. 79; "Die Kantische Philosophie hatte es bedurft, daß ihr Geist vom Buchstaben geschieden . . . wurde . . ." (Dif, p. 5).

70. Difference, p. 82; "Zeitbedürfnis" (Dif, p. 7).

71. Difference, p. 83; "das Bedürfnis nach einer Philosophie . . . , von welcher die Natur für die Mißhandlungen, die sie in dem Kantischen und Fichteschen Systeme leidet, versöhnt . . . wird . . ." (Dif, p. 8).

72. Difference, p. 89f.; "Bedürfnis der Philosophie" (Dif, p. 9f.).

73. H. S. Harris, Introduction, in G. W. F. Hegel, *The Difference between Fichte's and Schelling's System of Philosophy*, pp. 1-75, particularly p. 16.

74. I do not, however, want to imply that Hegel's view of history depends unquestionably on Herder's. I merely want to point to their comparable understandings of history. H. S. Harris was right to state that "[o]f all the major influences on the young Hegel, Herder's is the hardest to estimate reliably, but I suspect that it was great. From a remark of Hölderlin's we know that Hegel must have read some of Herder's work at Tübingen . . ." [H. S. Harris, *Hegel's Development: Toward the Sunlight, 1770-1801* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1972), p. 271].

75. Johann Gottfried Herder, *Ideen zur Philosophie der Geschichte der Menschheit*, ed. Martin Bollacher (Frankfurt am Main: Deutscher Klassiker Verlag, 1989), p. 340: "Legen wir den Begriff der Europäischen Kultur zum Grunde: So findet sich diese allerdings nur in Europa; setzen wir gar noch willkürliche Unterschiede zwischen Kultur und Aufklärung fest, deren keine doch, wenn sie rechter Art ist, ohne die andere sein kann, so entfernen wir uns noch weiter ins Land der Wolken. Bleiben wir aber auf der Erde und sehen im allgemeinsten Umfang das an, was uns die Natur, die den Zweck und Charakter ihres Geschöpfes am besten kennen mußte, als menschliche Bildung selbst vor Augen legt, so ist die keine andre als die Tradition einer Erziehung zu irgend einer Form menschlicher *Glückseligkeit und Lebensweise*."

76. Ibid. p. 341: "Alle Werke Gottes haben dieses eigen, daß ob sie

gleich alle zu Einem unübersehbaren Ganzen gehören, jedes dennoch auch für sich ein Ganzes ist und den göttlichen Charakter seiner Bestimmung in sich trägt. So ist es mit der Pflanze und mit dem Tier; wäre es mit dem Menschen und seiner Bestimmung anders?"

77. *Kritisches Journal der Philosophie*, vol. 2, Stück 1, July 1802.

78. For an overview of the complex relations between the philosophies of Kant, Fichte, Jacobi, and Schelling, see Alfred Denker, "Three Men Standing over a Dead Dog," in Christoph Asmuth, Alfred Denker, and Michael Vater (eds.), *Schelling: Zwischen Fichte und Hegel / Between Fichte and Hegel* (Amsterdam and Philadelphia: B. R. Grüner, 2000), pp. 381–401.

79. FK, p. 60; GW4, p. 319.

80. FK, pp. 55–56; "Die Vernunft, welche dadurch an und für sich schon heruntergekommen war, daß sie die Religion nur als etwas Positives, nicht idealistisch auffaßte, hat nichts besseres thun können, als nach dem Kampfe nunmehr auf sich zu sehen, zu ihrer Selbstbekenntniß zu gelangen und, ihr Nichtssein dadurch anzuerkennen, daß sie das Bessere, als sie ist, da sie nur Verstand ist, als ein Jenseits in einem Glauben außer und über sich setzt, wie in den Philosophien Kants, Jacobi's und Fichte's geschehen ist, und daß sie sich wieder zur Magd eines Glaubens mach" (GW4, p. 315f.).

81. FK, p. 56; "empirische Notwendigkeit" (GW4, p. 316).

82. FK, p. 64: "eine Cultur des gemeinen Menschenverstandes, der sich bis zum Denken eines Allgemeinen erhebt, den unendlichen Begriff aber, weil er gemeiner Verstand bleibt, für absolutes Denken nimmt, und sein sonstiges Anschauen des Ewigen und den unendlichen Begriff schlechthin auseinander läßt, es sey entweder, daß er auf jenes Anschauen überhaupt Verzicht thut, und sich im Begriff und der Empirie hält, oder daß er beyde hat, aber es nicht vereinigen, sein Anschauen nicht in den Begriff aufnehmen, noch Begriff und Empirie gleicherweise vernichten kann" (GW, pp. 322–23).

83. FK, p. 62; "... der absolute Begriff, schlechthin für sich seyend als praktische Vernunft, ist die höchste Objectivität im Endlichen, absolut als die Idealität an und für sich postulirt" (GW, p. 321).

84. FK, p. 62; "... sie verlegt den Gegensatz und das absolut postulierte Identischseyn in die Subjectivität des Gefühls, als einer unendlichen Sehnsucht und eines unheilbaren Schmerzes" (GW, p. 321).

85. Johann Gottlieb Fichte, *Briefwechsel 1793–1795*, ed. Reinhard Lauth and Hans Jacob (Stuttgart-Bad Cannstatt: Frommann-Holzboog, 1970), p. 202: "Haben Sie die Güte, beiliegende Bogen, den bis jetzt fertigen Anfang eines Lehrbuches, das in ein paar Monaten vollendet seyn soll, als einen Beweis jener Hochachtung anzunehmen. Ist irgend ein Denker in

Deutschland, mit welchem ich wünsche und hoffe in meinen besonderen Überzeugungen übereinzustimmen, so sind Sie es, mein verehrungswürdiger Herr:—ich, der ich von den meisten berühmten philosophischen Schriftstellern nichts als Widerspruch erwarte und darüber eben nicht sehr betreten bin. Wenn Sie ein wenig gut von mir denken, so können Ihnen die Gründe dieser vorherrschenden Achtung für Sie und Ihr Urteil nicht verborgen seyn.”

86. FK, p. 62; “. . . sie fordert die Form der Objectivität und der Grundsätze wie Kant, aber setzt den Widerstreit dieser reinen Objectivität gegen die Subjectivität zugleich als ein Sehnen und eine subjective Identität” (GW, p. 321).

87. FK, p. 61; “schöne Subjectivität des Protestantismus” (GW, p. 319).

88. Hegel already suggests in *Faith and Knowledge*—and therefore much earlier than W. H. Walsh presumed (see Walsh, *Hegel on the History of Philosophy*, p. 163)—that world history is the self-expression of the world spirit. As early as *The Vocation of Man* (*Die Bestimmung des Menschen*; 1800) Fichte argued that history is determined by the ‘mighty World-Spirit’ (*mächtige Weltgeist*) and by freedom, “which you [i.e., the mighty World-Spirit] are now constrained to adapt to your plans with labor and contrivance” [Johann Gottlieb Fichte, *The Vocation of Man*, trans. and ed. Roderick M. Chisholm (Indianapolis and New York: Bobbs-Merrill Company, 1956), p. 117].

89. FK, p. 57; “Die große Form des Weltgeistes aber, welche sich in jenen Philosophien erkannt hat, ist das Princip des Nordens, und es religiös angesehen, des Protestantismus, die Subjectivität, in welcher Schönheit und Wahrheit, in Gefühlen und Gesinnungen, in Liebe und Verstand sich darstellt . . .” (GW, p. 316).

90. FK, p. 55 f.; GW4, p. 315 f.

91. FK, p. 65; “allmächtige Zeit und ihre Cultur” (GW, p. 323).

92. FK, p. 56f.; “Unvollkommene Philosophien gehören überhaupt dadurch, daß sie unvollkommen sind, unmittelbar einer empirischen Notwendigkeit an, und deßwegen aus und an derselben läßt sich die Seite ihrer Unvollkommenheit begreifen; das Empirische, was in der Welt als gemeine Wirklichkeit daliegt, ist in Philosophien desselben in Form des Begriffs als Eins mit dem Bewußtsein und darum gerechtfertigt vorhanden” (GW4, p. 316).

93. FK, p. 59; “absoluten blinden Natur-Nothwendigkeit” (GW, p. 318).

94. FK, pp. 58–59f.; “Nachdem die Zeit gekommen war, hatte die unendliche Sehnsucht über den Leib und die Welt hinaus, mit dem Daseyn



sich versöhnt, aber so, daß die Realität, mit welcher die Versöhnung geschah, das Objective, welches von der Subjektivität anerkannt wurde, wirklich nur empirisches Daseyn, gemeine Welt und Wirklichkeit war, und also diese Versöhnung selbst, nicht den Charakter der absoluten Entgegensetzung, der im schönen Sehnen liegt, verlohrt, sondern daß sie sich nun auf den anderen Theil des Gegensatzes, auf die empirische Welt warf . . .” (GW4, p. 318).

95. FK, p. 189; “. . . so ist hierinn unmittelbar die äußere Möglichkeit gesetzt, daß die wahre Philosophie, aus dieser Bildung erstehend, und die Absolutheit der Endlichkeiten derselben vernichtend, mit ihrem ganzen, der Totalität unterworfenen Reichthum sich als vollendete Erscheinung zugleich darstellt . . .” (GW4, p. 413).

96. FK, p. 191; “aus welcher Härte allein, weil das Heitre, Ungründlichere und Einzelnere der dogmatischen Philosophien, so wie der Naturreligionen verschwinden muß, die höchste Totalität in ihrem ganzen Ernst und aus ihrem tiefsten Grund, zugleich allumfassend und in die heiterste Freyheit ihrer Gestalt auferstehen kann und muß” (GW4, p. 414).

97. ET, p. 492: “träge Bewegung und Aufeinanderfolge von Geistern dar, eine Galerie von Bildern, deren jedes, mit dem vollständigen Reichtume des Geistes ausgestattet, ebendarum sich so träge bewegt, weil das Selbst diesen ganzen Reichtum seiner Substanz zu durchdringen und zu verdauen hat” (GW9, p. 433).

98. ET, pp. 492–93; “Das Geisterreich, das auf diese Weise sich in dem Dasein gebildet, macht eine Aufeinanderfolge aus, worin einer den andern ablöste, und jeder das Reich der Welt von dem Vorhergehenden übernahm. Ihr Ziel ist die Offenbarung der Tiefe, und diese ist der absolute Begriff; diese Offenbarung ist hiemit das Aufheben seiner Tiefe oder seine Ausdehnung, die Negativität dieses insichseienden Ich, welche seine Entäußerung oder Substanz ist—und seine Zeit, daß diese Entäußerung sich an ihr selbst entäußert und so in ihrer Ausdehnung ebenso in ihrer Tiefe, dem Selbst ist. Das Ziel, das absolute Wissen, oder der sich als Geist wissende Geist hat zu seinem Wege die Erinnerung der Geister, wie sie an ihnen selbst sind und die Organisation ihres Reiches zu vollbringen” (GW9, pp. 433–34).

99. ET, p. 9: “Dies Eine Wissen, daß im Absoluten Alles gleich ist, der unterscheidenden und erfüllten oder Erfüllung suchenden und fordernden Erkenntnis entgegenzusetzen, oder sein Absolutes für die Nacht auszugeben, worin, wie man zu sagen pflegt, alle Kühe schwarz sind, ist die Naivität der Leere an Erkenntnis” (GW9, p. 17). See also Georg Friedrich Wilhelm Hegel, *Jenaer Notizenbuch (1803–1806)*, in *Gesammelte Werke*, in

Verbindung mit der Deutschen Forschungsgemeinschaft herausgegeben von der Nordrhein-Westfälischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, Bd. 5: *Schriften und Entwürfe (1799–1808)*, unter Mitarbeit von Theodor Ebert herausgegeben von Manfred Baum und Kurt Rainer Meist (Hamburg: Meiner, 1998), pp. 483–508; see p. 503: “Naturphilosophie. Es wird noch geraume Zeit vergehen, ehe es ganz ohne Flunkern darin abgeht. Geständniß hiervon oder dreistes Behaupten und Beharren dagegen. Das Absolute: in der Nacht sind alle Kühe schwarz—Das absolute Erkennen der große Besen, der Alles wegfegt, qui fait la maison nette.”

100. ET, p. 16; “. . . die Begeisterung, die wie aus der Pistole mit dem absoluten Wissen unmittelbar anfängt, und mit andern Standpunkten dadurch schon fertig ist, daß sie keine Notiz davon zu nehmen erklärt” (GW9, p. 24).

101. Difference, p. 93; “Das Absolute ist die Nacht, und das Licht jünger als sie, und der Unterschied beyder, sowie das Heraustreten des Lichts aus der Nacht, eine absolute Differenz; das Nichts das Erste, woraus alles Seyn, alle Mannichfaltigkeit des Endlichen hervorgegangen ist” (Dif, p. 16).

102. For the two main principles which are to be unified, see Karl Heinz Volkmann-Schluck, *Die Vollendung der abendländischen Metaphysik*, ed. Herbert Edelmann (Würzburg: Königshausen and Neumann, 1998), p. 27f; see also Difference, pp. 9–72.

103. ET, p. 17; “Weil die Substanz des Individuums, weil der Weltgeist die Geduld gehabt, diese Formen in der langen Ausdehnung der Zeit zu durchgehen und die ungeheure Arbeit der Weltgeschichte zu übernehmen . . .” (GW9, p. 25). See also J. C. Flay, “The History of Philosophy and the Phenomenology of Spirit,” in *Hegel and the History of Philosophy*, pp. 47–61.

104. ET, p. 15; “Dies Werden der Wissenschaft überhaupt, oder des Wissens, ist es, was diese Phänomenologie des Geistes, als der erste Teil des Systems derselben, darstellt. . . . Um zum eigentlichen Wissen zu werden, oder das Element der Wissenschaft, was ihr reiner Begriff ist, zu erzeugen, hat er durch einen langen Weg sich hindurch zu arbeiten” (GW9, p. 24).

## 2

# THE CONCEPT OF RECOGNITION IN HEGEL'S *PHENOMENOLOGY OF SPIRIT*

ROBERT R. WILLIAMS
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**T**he concept of recognition is a subordinate theme in Hegel's *Phenomenology*, in fact, rather than being a discrete theme, it is an operative concept in which and by means of which Hegel sets forth his main thematic concept, the concept of spirit.<sup>1</sup> Hegel does not bother to carefully define recognition or elaborate it comprehensively, but tends simply to employ it in setting forth his account of spirit. For this reason the concept of recognition is easy to overlook and has been overlooked in traditional Hegel scholarship. But this is a mistake because without appreciating recognition, it is easy to misinterpret Hegel's thought as a Cartesian 'philosophy of the subject', or a pure transcendental philosophy, which is something different than a philosophy of spirit.<sup>2</sup>

The concept of recognition denotes the approach to and discussion of intersubjectivity in German idealism. "Intersubjectivity" is a term that has recently become faddish and undergone diffusion into several quite different topics. First, it can refer to the problem of other minds. Here it is a specific issue in a larger cognitive problem of getting beyond Cartesian solipsism. Viewed from the strictly cognitive perspective, the other appears as an absence (from the 'cogito') that can never be brought to presence and a gap which no argument or inference can bridge. Hence the other appears as a failed cognition. Second, intersubjectivity can refer to ontological descriptions and analyses of being with others and relation to others. Here the focus is not on questions of evidence and access but on issues such as inequality, domination, hegemony versus equality: reciprocity, justice, fairness. These themes constitute the interpersonal sphere but also have wider significance and implications in the social sphere. Intersubjectivity thus broadens the concepts of the social and political.

For Hegel, the concept of recognition is not addressed to the 'other minds' problem. Hegel criticizes the Cartesian presuppositions that generate the solipsism–other minds problem in the first place. No one is so utterly isolated and alienated cognitively that a proof of the other is necessary. Moreover, the very act of demonstration involves crucial intersubjective and linguistic presuppositions that obviate the need of proof. For Hegel, the other is always already there as a presupposition of proof and not as its consequence. Hegel's concern is not how to prove the other's existence, but rather to describe and analyze the primordial human situation and condition of being-with. For Hegel, recognition is a technical concept related to the ontological analysis of an indigent freedom that needs an other, and that comes to actualization as being-with other. Recognition names and conceives that process in which freedom is liberated and realized, in which a new intersubjective self-identity is constituted. In this process an I that becomes a We, and its self-identity and mentality, are enlarged from singular to universal. Recognition generates the concept of spirit. Spirit is not a subject but rather the interhuman, the between, the shape of the human world.

Hegel's most explicit account of the concept of recognition is

found in the *Phenomenology of Spirit* (1807). Since the argument of the *Phenomenology* creates the context within which recognition is initially discussed and influences its mode of presentation, a brief comment on the general argument is necessary. Hegel intended the *Phenomenology* to be a general introduction to his system of philosophy. As a self-accomplishing skepticism, its argument strategy seeks to resolve the skeptical problem of the criterion through dialectical holism.<sup>3</sup>

Hegel's deployment of the concept of recognition is shaped and influenced by this argument and context. Given the strategy of immanent critique, Hegel will seek to show that all the shapes of consciousness, including shapes and patterns of recognition, subvert themselves. From this fact it is tempting to conclude that Hegel is developing a Sartrean view of intersubjectivity as endless conflict and failure and that Hegel intends to demonstrate that intersubjectivity is ontologically impossible and not merely a contingent failure. While this perception is not entirely incorrect, it is misleading and one-sided. If Hegel were really Sartrean, there would be no spirit or phenomenology of spirit. Hegel may begin with quasi-Sartrean assumptions, but he proceeds to criticize and move beyond these, and one important outcome is the very concept of spirit, constituted through reciprocal recognition. Sartre believed mutual recognition to be ontologically impossible. This is not the case for Hegel.

The *Phenomenology* begins its traversal of the shapes of consciousness with those that are immediate and pre-reflective, shunning all concepts. He shows that immediacy is itself not concept-free, but merely conceptually primitive. He moves to increasingly more complex, mediated shapes (*Gestalten*), making use of the concept of determinate negation, a forerunner of the *Aufhebung*. Hegel characterizes the *Phenomenology* as the process of its own becoming, a circle that achieves its true beginning only in its conclusion. Thus the earlier shapes of consciousness are not fixed foundations for all that follows, but rather themselves presuppose and derive from the later, more complex, mediated shapes of spirit.

Hegel does not offer a full treatment or account of intersubjectivity and recognition. Since he is focusing on many other issues in

his introduction to philosophical science, his discussion falls short of a comprehensive account. In certain respects, his discussion is less developed than Husserl's, Sartre's, or Levinas's. Yet in other respects—notably historical and cultural analysis—Hegel far exceeds the others. This is evident in the chapter on Spirit, which presents three historical spirits or spiritual epochs that constitute different types of selves: the naive unreflective self of classical culture, the alienated self of Roman and medieval culture, and the self-assured autonomous self of modernity.

The concept of recognition is present in several places in the traversal of the shapes of consciousness. It is most explicitly developed in the transition from consciousness to self-consciousness. Hegel presents consciousness immersed in nature and the life process of the species. He analyzes such a consciousness as desire (*Begierde*). This is a pre-ethical shape of consciousness that acts with violence toward its objects and culminates in the institution of master and slave. First in Hegel's empirics of recognition is an account of recognition in the state of nature. In this account, Hegel sketches the transition of human beings out of natural savagery toward civilization. The account of the life-and-death struggle for recognition that culminates in master and slave is the most famous and widely known of Hegel's discussions.<sup>4</sup>

A second setting of the concept of recognition is classical ethical life, Hegel's discussion of Greek culture and the family. But because the classical world did not, in Hegel's view, recognize the principle of subjectivity and subjective freedom, it also failed to appreciate or allow for the possibility for mutual recognition. This defect impinges upon cognition, which proves to be superficial or blind.<sup>5</sup> In classical ethical life, the recognition of freedom is either deficient or absent, so that individuals identify more or less fully with their social role. The institutions of family and state take priority over individuals; even worse, these institutions themselves come into tragic conflict, as in Sophocles's *Antigone*. The efforts of Antigone and Creon to find recognition are fruitless, and so this shape of consciousness also contains the seeds of its own self-subversion.

Finally, Hegel presents recognition in his discussion of modernity,

to wit, the realm of self-certain spirit. In modernity the right of individual subjective freedom is acknowledged and pushed to an extreme in morality and moral reflection. Morality is abstract and thus lacks the moment of recognition. This defect may be remedied by conscience and the conscientious self. Conscience, however, sets the stage for the highest rebellion of spirit and most resentment-laden shape of the struggle for recognition.

In what follows, I shall first discuss the concept of recognition and then turn to a brief examination of determinate shapes of recognition in the different contexts of the state of nature, classical ethical life, and modernity.

## I. THE CONCEPT OF RECOGNITION

Hegel precedes his analysis of recognition with a discussion of desire (*Begierde*). The analysis of desire as a lack and as a process of satisfaction achieved through negating and consuming its object(s) is well known. Desire begins as a kind of natural solipsism that is naively self-centered and narcissistic; its self-centeredness is manifest in the fact that it regards its objects simply as things to be consumed. The structure of desire is that it achieves satisfaction through a process that negates the object's independence and in which the object is consumed. The satisfaction of desire means that its constitutive lack is filled, and the subject's identity with itself is restored—at least temporarily—by negation/destruction of the object. Thus desire begins and ends (i.e., achieves satisfaction) in a natural solipsism. The object or 'other' that desire seeks is merely instrumental to its satisfaction, and the 'telos' of satisfaction is the reinstatement of its solipsistic identity or 'I am I'. Moreover, precisely because the object is consumed, satisfaction is merely temporary. The process of desire and its satisfaction is repeated endlessly. This analysis of desire links it to the life-process of the species.

Note that desire and its satisfaction are asymmetrically, non-reciprocally related to their object. The object is negated; the object is consumed and the consuming of it is the satisfaction of desire. Desire

is a pre-ethical, pre-rational condition of individual consciousness that must be transformed if mutual recognition is to occur. Recognition, too, is a need, a desire, but it is desire qualified as desire for another. Mutual recognition presupposes that the 'object' is not simply consumed or merely instrumental to the satisfaction of desire, but rather continues and endures, i.e., recognizes the self and legitimates its self-certainty. In short, recognition involves a deepening of desire and a new orientation toward the object of desire, and even a new 'object' that is desired. Self-identity is restored not by eliminating the other, but by establishing some sort of relation with the other. Hegel's account of the process of recognition is not simply a continuation of the pattern of satisfaction of desire through elimination and consumption of the object. Rather recognition involves a sublimation of desire. In the process of recognition, desire is deepened, expanded, and transformed. In short, desire is desire for another: "Self-consciousness attains its satisfaction only in another self-consciousness."<sup>6</sup> Desire is fundamentally a desire for the other. The other, or the confrontation with the other, both shatters the natural solipsism of the self and 'pulls' it out of its natural solipsism. The analysis of recognition therefore is also and at the same time a story of *self-overcoming*, through which an enlarged ethical-social mentality (to use Hannah Arendt's term) or *Geist* is attained.

Hegel begins his analysis of the concept of recognition thus:

Self-consciousness is in and for itself through the fact that *it exists in and for itself for an other*. That is, it exists only as recognized. The concept of this its unity in its doubling, the infinity realizing itself in self-consciousness, is a many-sided intersection of and correlation between multiple meanings. Consequently these elements must on the one hand be precisely distinguished and kept separate, and, on the other hand, they must be taken and known in their *opposite* meaning, namely, in this very differentiation they are nevertheless *not different*. The double signification of the distinguished elements lies in the nature of self-consciousness to be infinite, or to be immediately the opposite of the determination in which it is posited. The exposition of this spiritual unity in its doubling will present the movement of recognition (*Anerkennen*).<sup>7</sup>



There are several points to be noted. First, Hegel treats the concept of recognition in a series of imaginative variations. In this conceptual play, the determinations of self and other are, on the one hand, to be distinguished and kept separate and, on the other hand, in spite of separation, they must also be taken as not different, or as united. Hegel's account is thoroughly dialectical. The analysis must focus on the difference of the other from the self, and, within this difference, on their identity and union. It is easy to err by focusing on difference to the exclusion of identity (as do Kojève and Sartre) and by focusing on identity to the exclusion of difference (as does Levinas in his criticism that Hegel reduces the other to the same). The difference of self and other as well as their identity within this differentiation must be retained. But why is such attention to double meanings necessary?

The reason is that intersubjectivity is in play: recognition is a process that plays out between two self-conscious beings; it is a joint act of double and opposing significations. For Hegel self-consciousness is 'doubled'.<sup>8</sup> Ludwig Siep explains:

This doubling does not signify a totality laid out in various moments . . . such as occurred in the species process. Since both moments are here determined as self-consciousnesses; their relation to each other is layered in double-meanings. . . . Two self-consciousnesses do not relate to each other like mere things that have an effect on each other, or like forces that interact with each other. The reciprocal relation between two self-consciousnesses transcends these, because for each the other is a moment in its own self-relation. Both depend, not only on the relation of the one to the other, but on the self-relation and self-understanding of the other. *Neither can alter itself without co-altering the other insofar as it stands in relation to it.* A friend undergoes a change himself through a change in his friend. The relation is therefore not simply causal interaction (*Wechselwirkung*), but rather a double-signification. *Recognition, as a double-signifying act of two self-consciousnesses, is a relation in which the relata relate to themselves through the relation to the other, and relate to the other through their own self-relation. Thus the self's relation to itself is made possible by the corresponding relation to the other.*<sup>9</sup>

We do not make a problematic move from an isolated individual 'cogito' to the other. Doubling means that the other is always already there as a condition of self-relation and self-identity, even if the other is not directly present or accessible. The paradoxical dialectic of intersubjectivity means that "each of the two contains the whole relation. . . ." <sup>10</sup> This is not evident at the outset of the process of recognition. But the process unfolds through a dialectic in which on the one hand there is a sharp distinction between self and other, and on the other hand there is a union of the two, since each is only through its other.

The process of recognition is influenced by a dialectical self-identity. The self is what it is not and is not what it is. Hegel conceives the self in its desires not as a simple, stable, quiescent self-identity, but as a complex, restless, self-repulsive, negative identity. This self-repulsing negativity means that the self is not initially present to itself; rather immediacy is deceptive. The immediate self does not yet know what it is. It can discover what it is only through the mediation of an other. Self-consciousness requires an other to confirm and transform its own self-understanding.

I want to sketch briefly the stages of the process of recognition that Hegel identifies in his *Phenomenology*. There are three phases in the concept of recognition. <sup>11</sup> These are, first, the phase of abstract, parochial universality in which pre-ethical desire and the pattern of desire predominate. The other may be acknowledged, but only superficially as a temporary obstacle to be eliminated. The other is regarded merely instrumentally as a means to confirm and satisfy self-identity. There is an attempt to coerce and compel the other to recognize. Thus begins the life-and-death struggle. The second phase is the opposition between absolute particulars. Carried through to its logical conclusion, such opposition could end in death. But if the struggle stops short of death, the result is master and slave, an unequal recognition that both ends the violence of struggle and institutionalizes the inequality of the result. Finally, there is a phase of mutual absolution, in which each releases the other and allows it to be. This mutual release allows for an intersubjectively mediated satisfaction that is at the same time a mediated autonomy. The 'We' emerges as concrete mediated universality.

The first is the phase of initial confrontation with other. Since the *Phenomenology* sets forth a genetic history of the shapes of consciousness, the starting point is logically and conceptually primitive. Each party operates with the presumption of being absolute, i.e., independent of relation and qualification by other. Each presumes to be universal, but this is the parochial universality of desire. It excludes difference, otherness, and relation. For this reason, the confrontation with other is experienced as an abrupt self-transcendence, i.e., a plunge into relation and otherness that is a loss of self. The presence of the other forces a change or 'othering' that results in a finding of self as other, or as a challenge to and possible loss of the original naive and parochial certitude. Further, the parochial universality of this phase is manifest in the fact that the self is unable to recognize the other as other, and so finds only itself in the other.

It is crucial to note that self-othering, or alteration, is occasioned by the other. This means that the other is a condition of self-othering, and for this very reason the other cannot be collapsed into the self-othering of the first. Conversely, the self's 'inner' diremption from itself and relation to itself are conditions of its relation to the other. Consequently, self-consciousness, self-relation, and self-othering and the other, respectively, are correlative and should not be confused or identified. The self-loss consists in the fact that the self discovers that it is not universal, but, confronted with the other, it is a particular opposed to another particular. This reversal leads to the second moment, namely, opposition between particulars.

The encounter with other shows that the putative 'absolute self' is also a particular in relation to another particular. This 'loss of self' (namely, the transition from presumptive universality to mere particularity) must be overcome. Particularity must be cancelled. This means, first of all, that the opposing other must be cancelled or eliminated. Second, it means that the self must demonstrate its transcendence of its particular (natural) existence, i.e., that it is more than and not tied to its particular existence. The self can do this by risking its life, e.g., by seeking to eliminate the other. Cancellation of particularity leads to struggle. But the struggle is not simply directed toward the elimination of the other; it is over recognition and relation. The

allegedly 'absolute self' needs the other to recognize and confirm it. That is why the death of the opponent would be self-defeating. To eliminate the other would be to eliminate a condition of the self's own freedom and self-identity. To compel the other's recognition, however, means that the self is no longer absolute and independent, but stands in relation to the other and is qualified by its relation. Thus the self now explicitly enters into a process of mediation. The putative 'universal self' must seek to incorporate the other's perspective, rather than exclude and suppress it.

However, such incorporation of the other is impossible if it is carried out in a one-sided way by coercive means. Each side must do something. Joint reciprocal mediation is necessary. The self must 'return' to itself out of its 'othered' state by winning itself in the other's recognition. This return to self out of otherness is not simply a restoration of the original abstract and 'pure' self-identity. Rather, the original self-identity is mediated and enriched by the other's recognition. Incorporating the other's perspective into one's own produces an enlarged mentality and self-identity. The enlarged self-identity is thus dependent on the contingencies of the other's freedom and recognition. Moreover, this enriching return to self is possible only if the self, in turn, releases the other and allows the other to go free.<sup>12</sup> This mutual releasement or "letting be" connotes not indifference but granting the other her freedom to be. It is to renounce seizing upon the other's possibilities and freedom. It is to renounce coercion. In order for mutual recognition to occur, the other must cease to be the death of my possibilities, and vice versa. Genuine, as opposed to phony or coerced social solidarity, presupposes such mutual recognition and releasement. Only through such mutual releasement and reciprocal recognition does *Geist*, the universal consciousness and concrete identity, emerge. The attainment of such concrete universality means that being with the other is no longer a limitation or restriction on freedom, but rather an enhancement and concrete actualization of freedom. This situation of reciprocal recognition is one of communicative freedom, which Hegel describes as being at home with self in an other.

Following Ludwig Siep, I identify four further dimensions of

mutual-reciprocal recognition that express the nexus of freedom and recognition and bring out its ethical implications. These dimensions of freedom are *autonomy*, *union*, *self-overcoming*, and *Freigabe* or *release*.<sup>13</sup> These dimensions of freedom are important, not only in their distinctness, but more importantly as interconnected elements. It is only when they are taken together that the richness and complexity of Hegel's account of recognition, freedom, and ethical life begin to come into focus. For Hegel, as for Kant, autonomy implies a break with nature and natural determination. But Hegel differs from Kant in conceiving autonomy as actual not in isolated individuals but only in community with others. That is, autonomy is intersubjectively mediated. Further, autonomy is an ethical conception, involving self-overcoming. The autonomous self must overcome its merely natural inclinations and egoism, the egoism of desire (*Begierde*). What occasions this self-overcoming is the encounter with the other. When the other comes to count, the self is pulled out of its natural solipsism, which is negated and sublimated toward responsibility for and union with the other. Self-overcoming constitutes and results in an ethical subjectivity.

The final dimension is *Freigabe*, or the release (absolution) of the other in its otherness, allowing it to be, that makes explicit what has been implicit all along, namely, that freedom for Hegel is intersubjective. *Freigabe* is the consummation of reciprocal recognition, through which *Geist* is constituted as the 'I' that is a 'We.' *Freigabe* makes it clear that the 'We' Hegel is after is a community of freedom that does not absorb or reduce individuals to some homogeneity, but rather presupposes and requires individuals in their differences. *Freigabe* is the recognition of the otherness of the other, the difference of difference. Union with the other is also an expression of difference. Only such reciprocal release makes the 'We' a concrete universal rather than an abstract identity.

A 'We' also arises out of master and slave. However this We is deficiently universal. It is an abstract identity because it exhibits the basic one-sided pattern of desire; master and slave is an unequal, nonreciprocal recognition. The slave is allowed to be, but not allowed to be independent. Hence the process of mediation and recognition is short-circuited; this We is not reciprocal but dominated by the master.

## 2. EXAMPLES OF RECOGNITION

Hegel cautions his readers that his analysis of the concept of recognition is 'from one side' as it were. But what is to come about can only come about jointly. In short, recognition is an action that is inherently two-sided or mutual. A one-sided action would be 'useless'. Consequently conceptual analysis must be supplemented with an analysis of how the concept of recognition appears in experience. We move from an analysis of the concept to an examination of human action in which the concept is embedded, modified and rendered determinate. Action is likewise embedded in a wider sociocultural context that undergoes historical development.

### Life-and-Death Struggle, Master and Slave

Master and Slave is quite possibly the best known passage in the *Phenomenology*. Recall that here recognition is presented as occurring under the conditions of raw desire, in the state of nature, prior to the constitution of any ethics or civilized society. This means that the starting point is one of zero mediation, with each self believing itself to be absolute, independent. But this absoluteness is merely presumptive, i.e., merely a subjective self-certainty. In the initial pattern of desire, subjective certainty is confirmed by negating and consuming the object. Satisfaction is the confirmation of self-certainty. Such satisfaction, however, is inherently egoistic, even narcissistic. The task is to bring this subjective certainty to objective expression, and this means dealing with the other.

There is a collision between the presumptive self-certainty of total independence and the confrontation with the other. The presence of the other shatters the presumptive absolute certainty and self-identity. The presence of the other is experienced initially as a loss of self. This is intolerable and prompts a response.

On the one hand, each has to make its self-certainty manifest to the other, and, on the other hand, each seeks to compel the other to recognize this subjective certainty. These two dimensions coincide, because compelling the other to recognize one's self-certainty means

putting one's own existence at risk, and the willingness to place oneself at risk shows one's transcendence of nature, i.e., one's merely natural existence. Consequently, a life-and-death struggle ensues. Each seeks to cancel the other as a means of preserving its original certainty and identity.

If this struggle were to end with the elimination and death of the other, this might restore the primitive self-certainty of being absolutely independent. But such a victory would be hollow, because what is needed is the other's recognition. If the other were simply eliminated, then no recognition would be possible at all. Moreover, continuing the struggle to the point of death would not show transcendence of nature; it would merely show that both despised life. The point, however, is not to end life, but to secure recognition and intersubjective legitimization of certainty. This requires that abstract negation (or murder) be displaced in favor of a determinate or limited negation. Some way has to be found of stopping the struggle short of death. This is what 'master/slave' accomplishes.

Hegel depicts the construction of master/slave as follows: One of the parties to the struggle begins to realize that life, which he was hitherto willing to risk for recognition, is just as 'essential' or important to him as recognition. Death would mean the absolute end of all possibilities. This party fears death, for death means the end of desire altogether. Fearing death, he prefers to survive, even if that means giving up his need for recognition. Renouncing his need for recognition is his determinate negation; better endure this determinate (partial) negation than face death, the absolute master. In order to survive, however, he must give up his claim to recognition and become an object for the master, i.e., he becomes a slave. The other, who has 'won' the struggle, becomes master. The master does not fear death and does not negate his desire. His victory is that he is recognized as master by the slave.

Note that master and slave, as miserable an institution as it is, nevertheless represents a relative ethical-cultural advance over the sheer slaughter that would take place if the desire for recognition had remained absolute and unqualified. Odd as it may seem, master and slave is a 'positive' development in that violence is stopped short of

murder. Thus master/slave represents a cultural development away from sheer savagery and violence. However, while master/slave may represent a restraint upon violence, it also institutionalizes violence. Violence is *aufgehoben*, preserved, in the fundamental inequality of recognition: the master is recognized by the slave but does not reciprocally recognize the slave. Such inequality is institutionalized in the shape of domination, lordship, and bondage.

The master's desire and absolute self-assurance remain intact; he has no fear of death. Through successfully risking his life, the master proves his transcendence of the natural world, his independence of mere existence. Conversely, the slave in giving up his independence sinks to the level of a mere commodity. He prefers bare survival to death, which shows that he is in thrall to the fear of death, the absolute master. His very life and the means of sustaining it are in the hands of an other. He labors for an other. The master relates immediately to the slave through the threat of death and mediately to the world through the slave.

This alters the master's relation to the world. The master relates to the world by interposing the slave between himself and the world. The slave labors for the master, procuring and fashioning objects desired by the master, who is spared the labor necessary to satisfy his desire:

What mere desire cannot do, namely, have done with the thing, the master succeeds in doing, and he achieves the enjoyment of the thing and gratification of his desire. Desire alone could not do this because of the independence of the thing. The master, however, has interposed the slave between himself and things, and can appropriate to himself only the dependent aspect of things, and so is pure enjoyment. The independent aspect of things he leaves to the slave who works upon it.<sup>14</sup>

As is well known, the relation of mastery and slavery is inherently unstable and contains the seeds of its own downfall. The master leads a life of pure enjoyment and satisfaction unsullied by laboring on things. He directly appropriates and enjoys things (i.e., as worked over and pre-shaped by the slave). He becomes a passive consumer. And



since the slave works not to satisfy his own desire, but only that of the master, his labor is inessential. What the slave does is actually the doing of the master. The master remains the absolute power before which the independent being of things is negated and reshaped.

The master obtains the recognition that he needs under such conditions. The paradox of mastery is that it has 'won' the recognition of *slave*, whom it considers to be inessential and unimportant. What, then, is this recognition really worth? Owing to his fear of death, the slave accepts the status of a thing in order to survive. The slave has surrendered his claims to being-for-self (*Fürsichsein*) and exists as a commodity or property of the master. Consequently, the master despises him and holds the slave's recognition to be worthless. Thus the recognition that the master receives from the slave is deficient.

The unessential consciousness [of the slave] is merely an object for the master; nevertheless it constitutes the truth of the master's self-certainty. But it is obvious that this object does not correspond to its concept. Rather the object in which the master has accomplished his mastery is quite different than an independent consciousness. What confronts the master now is not an independent, but a dependent consciousness. Therefore the master is not certain of the truth of his being-for-self, because his truth is found in an unessential consciousness and in an unessential action."<sup>15</sup>

The master's goal was to gain recognition, i.e., independent confirmation and legitimization of his freedom. But in spite of his victory over the slave, the master remains uncertain of his own truth, precisely because the slave's recognition is coerced. The truth of the master is the slave. That is, the reduction of the slave to a mere commodity makes explicit what mastery is. Moreover, having reduced the other to a slave, to something inessential, the master must now find the *truth* of his self-certainty in the slave. This is impossible. For the slave is no longer an *independent self-consciousness which alone can jointly elevate self-certainty to truth*. Truth requires that the recognition of the other be freely bestowed. It cannot be coerced or forced. Since the slave does only what the master wants, the master cannot

receive from him a *genuinely independent recognition*. So the master can never be intersubjectively 'certain' of his self-certainty: Believing the slave, the master lapses into false consciousness. Not believing the slave, the master must remain suspicious and 'on guard'. Thus the 'winner' loses.

Hegel observes that servitude as well as mastery proves to be the opposite of what it at first seems to be. "Just as mastery showed that it is the opposite of what it intends to be, so servitude will, in its working out, become the opposite of what it immediately is."<sup>16</sup> Hegel considers the servile consciousness first in its subordination to mastery. The servile consciousness fears death and surrenders its claim to recognition in order to survive. Servility is expressed as the fear of death: "The servile consciousness does not have anxiety about this or that particular, or for a few isolated moments. Rather it is 'in Angst' about its entire existence. For it has felt the fear of death, *the absolute master*. It has fallen apart; it has trembled throughout its being and everything firm and fixed in it has been shaken."<sup>17</sup> Fear of the mundane master is the occasion for fear or anxiety (*Angst*) about death, the "absolute master." Not only is death a negativity that shakes and dissolves everything solid and substantial, but the fear of death compels the renunciation of the need for recognition. This renunciation of independence transforms the slave into a dependent thing, a commodity laboring for the master.

Slavery, however, undergoes a transformation and reversal not unlike mastery. The world-transforming power of negation, or being-for-self (*Fürsichsein*), which is first intuited ultimately in death, externally and proximately in the master, is discovered to be the slave's own power: "Although the fear of the lord is the beginning of wisdom, it has not yet occurred to consciousness that it is *for itself* [autonomous] being-for-self. But through his labor the slave comes to himself, i.e., becomes conscious of what he really is [*Fürsichsein*]."<sup>18</sup> In an important move, Hegel locates inversion of the *Gestalt* of the servile consciousness in labor. In the transformation of the world by his labor lies the possibility of the liberation of the slave from his thralldom.

Under conditions of involuntary labor, the slave must learn to

restrain his desire and postpone gratification. The master, not the slave, immediately appropriates, consumes, and enjoys the products of labor. The master leads a life of pleasure. But this leads to decadence: "In the moment which corresponds to desire in the master's consciousness, it seemed that the aspect of the unessential relation to the thing fell to the lot of the slave, since the thing retained its independence. Desire has reserved to itself the pure negating of the object and therein its unmixed self-feeling. This satisfaction of the master is for this reason a vanishing one, for it lacks the objective side [of things] and permanence. In contrast, labor is restrained desire, a delayed vanishing, or, labor shapes and forms."<sup>19</sup> The slave's labor is desire held in check, a delayed gratification.

Although the slave lacks direct enjoyment of the products of his labor, he nevertheless comes to see that the shaping and producing of objects is the key to objective permanence and independence: "It is precisely in laboring, where it initially seemed to find only an alien significance [namely, working for someone else] that the slave rediscovers his own mind and independent significance."<sup>20</sup> He becomes *for himself* being-for-self, and when this occurs, the slave has overcome his self-alienation.

As a shape of consciousness, master/slave exhibits a transition from the raw desire and the violence of the state of nature to a primitive civilized condition founded on unequal recognition. To be sure, this inequality is unjust, but at least it has suspended sheer violence. As Hegel observes in the *Philosophy of Right*, slavery belongs to a transitional period in which wrong is still regarded as right.<sup>21</sup> The *Phenomenology* does not exhibit the transition from unequal to equal-reciprocal shapes of recognition, at least not at the world-historical level. But it does exhibit shapes of recognition which are not driven by desire and which transcend domination.

### Recognition in Ancient Ethical Life: Family

A full account of Hegel's analysis of the family is not possible here.<sup>22</sup> But it is important to note that the family is an institution that straddles what Hegel calls natural ethical life and ethical life proper. It is

at once natural, concerned with procreation, and ethical. This means that the family, as natural, is an expression of desire, namely, of the parents for each other, i.e., the marriage union. Thus the family is a sublated higher level of desire, a desire that has at least started to become ethical, and in which the other counts.<sup>23</sup> Desire no longer seeks to consume its object but rather to unite with its object. For this reason, there is no talk here about a struggle for recognition or about raising a subjective certainty to public expression and confirmation. Marriage as a union of husband and wife overcomes such oppositions and conditions of violence. It is a union that brings together the separated elements into which Greek ethical substance divides itself, namely, the human and the divine, man and woman, the state and the family. The family is a union of man and woman, and through them a union of human and divine law.

The existence of the family, even as the highest institution of natural ethical life, presupposes the actuality and therefore the possibility of reciprocal recognition; however, Hegel does not provide a descriptive analysis of such recognition in his account of the family. This is due in part to the fact that the concept of reciprocal recognition grew out of Hegel's concept of love, which articulates union, in this case, the union of the family. Hegel maintains that membership in the family is constituted in part by blood relation, in part by reciprocal recognition of that blood relation. That is, in the family, members immediately recognize each other and themselves in each other.<sup>24</sup>

This general principle receives qualifications. The mutual recognition between husband and wife, pervaded as it is by desire, remains a natural one, or 'We', and thus is only a representation of spirit, not actual spirit. Further, while husband and wife mutually recognize each other and thus constitute a We, their mutual recognition finds objective expression in a third, namely, the child, the offspring of their union. In this way, the mutual recognition of the husband and wife supports and has intergenerational extension and endurance. As Patricia J. Mills has argued, however, Hegel's treatment of the family contains important asymmetries which contradict the mutual recognition that supposedly is its basis and principle. Mills persuasively demonstrates an asymmetry in the recognition between husband and

wife in Hegel's account of Greek *Sittlichkeit*.<sup>25</sup> The wife recognizes the husband as a singularity, but since the wife does not undergo a struggle for recognition, she is not recognized as an individual. Nor does she know "herself as this particular self in the other partner."<sup>26</sup> Thus, while Hegel is committed to a concept of marriage as a determinate shape of mutual recognition, his discussion of marriage is tied to a framework that undermines such mutual recognition. These important issues lie beyond our present task.<sup>27</sup>

Further, the family members recognize and are concerned for individual members in their singularity. This is why Hegel spends so much time discussing the cult of the dead and burial practices. Unlike the state, which is concerned only with citizens and can send them off to die in war, the family is concerned with its members as individuals and so gives their death and burial a human significance that protects the singularity in death against natural forces and oblivion. This analysis sets the stage for Hegel's treatment of *Antigone*.

Before examining recognition in Hegel's analysis of *Antigone*, we need to focus briefly on the relation of recognition between brother and sister. According to Hegel, the brother-sister relation is one that is devoid of desire. In them, he maintains, the blood relation has attained stable equilibrium and union, and their relation is devoid of the passions pervading husband and wife. Consequently, Hegel believes the recognition between brother and sister is pure, reciprocal, and directed to each other as singularities. It is important to note this recognition of singularity because of the widespread view that reciprocal recognition generates a universal concept, a We, and that what gets recognized in the We is merely what the two selves have in common, i.e., their abstract identity. Recognition thus allegedly results in a homogeneous We that suppresses or excludes individual differences. This view is incorrect. Brother and sister recognize each other as individuals. In Hegel's analysis, it is the brother, not the husband, that recognizes the woman in her singularity. The relationship to the brother is for the sister the highest ethical significance just for this reason; the woman does not undergo a struggle for recognition and never achieves recognition as singular except through her brother. This is why the loss of a brother is irreplaceable

to the woman, unlike her other relationships to her father, husband, and children.<sup>28</sup> For this reason her duty to her brother is the highest ethical duty. This duty, grounded in mutual recognition, makes Antigone the avenger, the Erinyes, of her dead brother and brings her into conflict with state power.

### Recognition in Greek Tragedy (*Antigone*)

Classical Greek culture constitutes for Hegel a historical realm of spirit. Spirit here is not simply the result of interactions between partners but is the shape of a world-epoch.<sup>29</sup> Spirit in this world-historical-epochal sense is an articulated whole. Spirit splits up into distinct ethical substances, namely, a human and divine law that corresponds to the distinct institutions of state and family and to the anthropological contrasts between man and woman, respectively.<sup>30</sup> The human law is manmade, written, accessible, while the divine law governing the family is not made, unwritten, and apprehended only through individual conscience. More significant for our present purposes is the unreflective, opaque character of these distinctions. These determinations simply *are*, and individuals are simply and immediately subordinate to them; they are not yet in a position to think critically about them, much less criticize them. Hegel writes:

Thus Sophocles' *Antigone* acknowledges them as the unwritten and infallible law of the gods. "They are not of yesterday or today, but everlasting. Though where they came from, none of us can tell." They *are*. If I inquire after their origin and confine them to the point whence they arose, then I have transcended them; for now it is I who am the universal, and *they* are conditioned and limited. If they are supposed to be validated by *my* insight, then I have already denied their unshakeable intrinsic being and regard them as something which, for me, is perhaps true, but also is perhaps not true. Ethical disposition consists just in sticking steadfastly to what is right, and abstaining from all attempts to move, or shake, or derive it . . . . By acknowledging the absoluteness of the right, I am within the ethical substance and this substance is thus the essence of self-consciousness.<sup>31</sup>

Self-consciousness in the ancient world naively expresses and is subordinate to the objective ethical life and substance. It does not yet take up a critical stance toward the articulated structures of ethical life, the human and the divine, man and woman, state and family. It simply and naively lives in these structures. From the modern perspective, it resembles a false consciousness because "as a knowing [it] is on the one hand ignorant of what it does, and on the other knows what it does, a knowledge which for that reason is a deceptive knowledge. It learns through its own act the contradiction of those powers into which the substance divided itself and their mutual downfall . . . and thus finds its own downfall."<sup>32</sup>

Hegel analyzes the conflict between family and state power, represented by Antigone and Creon respectively, as a case of tragic recognition. Each character has a false consciousness, a one-sided grasp of the whole, which leads him or her to identify entirely with his or her particular social role and its duties while denying validity to the claims of the other. Both of these are, within their respective limits, justified and right. They are limited and partial, however, and for this reason they cannot and do not recognize the other, much less its legitimacy:

The ethical consciousness, because it is decisively for one of these two powers [namely family-divine law or state-human law], is essentially character. It does not accept that both [unwritten divine law and written human law] are fundamentally the same. For this reason the opposition between them appears as an unfortunate collision of duty with a reality that has no ethical claims of its own . . . . Since it sees right only on one side and wrong on the other, that consciousness which belongs to the divine law sees in the other side only capricious human violence, while that which holds to the human law sees in the other only the self-will and disobedience of private being-for-self [*Fürsichsein*]. For the commands of government have a universal public meaning open to the light of day; the other [unwritten] law is locked up in the darkness of the nether regions, and in its outer existence appears only as the will of an isolated individual, which, as contradicting the first, is an outrage.<sup>33</sup>

Creon regards Antigone as arbitrarily and capriciously violating the rules he has established. Antigone sees Creon as treating the state

as subject to his merely private whim. Each fails to recognize the other as a legitimate aspect of ethical life and order (*Sittlichkeit*). Each is in false consciousness.

In Hegel's view, the classical world had a deficient conception of subjectivity and freedom. This deficiency finds expression in the naive, immediate consciousness of ethical life on the part of Antigone and Creon, and underlies their immediate identification with their respective social roles. Hegel terms such limited, pre-reflective subjectivity 'character'. In it, freedom is not yet explicit, but subordinate to, and a function of, social role. Given such provincial false consciousness, no middle or universal emerges from their interaction and each is unable to find self-recognition in the other.<sup>34</sup> Thus through their blindness to each other and the institutions they represent, the social order comes into tragic conflict with itself.

Antigone's tragic suffering prompts her to say *pathontes an sugnoimen harmartekotes*, which Hegel translates as "*weil wir leiden, anerkennen wir, dass wir gefehlt*" ("Because we suffer, we recognize that we have erred").<sup>35</sup> Recognition here involves tragic pathos in that there is no emergent middle. Suffering is a symptom of something hidden, concealed; suffering reveals estrangement, which is constitutive of tragic recognition. This form of recognition is tragic in that discovery occurs too late, after the deed, which is in retrospect trespass. Tragic self-recognition in the other is accompanied by the demise of the self. The limited discovery or self-recognition in the other leads to an acknowledgement of fault, sufficient to constitute tragic guilt, but not sufficient to overcome the conflict within the ethical realm or between the characters.<sup>36</sup> Each recognizes itself belatedly as part of a larger whole to which the other also legitimately belongs. The mutual personal tragedies of Antigone and Creon anticipate the larger social-political tragedy of the downfall of Greek *Sittlichkeit*.

### Recognition in Modernity: Conscience, Evil, Forgiveness

Modernity constitutes a third epoch or shape of spirit. Modernity recognizes and legitimates precisely what Antigone insisted on, namely, the right of individual subjective freedom, or the right of



conscience.<sup>37</sup> Modernity inverts the relation between consciousness and law prevalent in classical Greek ethical life. Whereas for Antigone the origin of the law remains shrouded in mystery and individuals straightforwardly subordinate themselves to the law, modern morality is reflective, autonomous, and self-assured. Hegel identifies two positions within modernity: morality and conscience. The morality position is constituted by dualisms between reason and sensibility, between ought and is, between universal and particular, between morality and nature. Hegel exposes a nest of contradictions and dissimulations within morality and the moral point of view. These turn on a central antinomy in the morality position: Pure moral duty both is possible and yet not actual; i.e., morality both is and is not.<sup>38</sup>

Modernity's predominant ethos comes to expression in autonomous individualism. Hegel points out that morality is individualistic in its orientation to such an extent that it lacks the concept of recognition.<sup>39</sup> Its concept of individualism is abstract, i.e., individual morality is abstracted from action: "I act morally when I am *conscious* of performing only pure duty and nothing else but that; this means, in fact, when I do *not* act."<sup>40</sup> There is also an abstraction from recognition; as reflective *consciousness* of pure duty that holds back from action, morality does not see any need for recognition. After all, there is nothing to recognize but pure intentions, and these cannot be recognized in their 'reflective purity'. Of course, morality cannot really dispense with the need for recognition entirely, but there is not much here to be recognized, for the whole act of the moral self consists simply in producing the pure consciousness of duty. Hence in morality

that first, immediate unity of individuality and universality is sundered; the universal which all the same remains a purely spiritual entity, the state of being recognized . . . is object and content of the self . . . . But it does not have the form of an existence free from the self; in this self, therefore, it obtains no filling and positive content, no world. Moral self-consciousness does indeed let its universality go free so that it becomes a nature of its own, and equally holds fast to it within itself as a superseded moment. It is, however, merely an insincere play that alternates these two determinations. It is as con-

science that it first has, in its self-certainty, a content for the previously empty duty.<sup>41</sup>

Morality is primarily worldless, a reflective affair. This defect, in Hegel's view, is remedied by conscience. Conscience reconciles the abstract universality of the morality position with an equally abstract individuality to produce a new alternative, the third shape of world—historical spirit, the conscientious self. Conscience is the successor to morality. Whereas morality was a nest of contradictions and dissimulations, conscience is self-assured and supposedly overcomes the dualisms between reason and sensibility, universal and particular. The self-assurance of conscience is evident in Hegel's allusion to Jacobi's claim that the law is made for the sake of man, not man for the sake of the law.<sup>42</sup>

Hegel treats the conscientious self as a totality, a whole of 'parts' or moments. The first aspect is law, but now law is no longer transcendent but immanent in the self: the law exists for the sake of man and not man for the sake of the law. But if the law no longer stands over and against the individual self as that to which the self is subordinate, then the relation of individual to duty undergoes a change. When the law ceases to be transcendent and becomes immanent in the self as constitutive of conscience, then (1) the law is relativized by conscience, and (2) intersubjectivity is likewise a moment 'in' the totality of conscience. Conscience is a form of being-with. Let us consider each briefly.

If the self is conceived as a totality of elements, and if the content of law and ethics is not abstractly transcendent as in morality, then conscience relativizes all putative absolute ethical principles and norms. As Hegel observes, "[C]onscience does not recognize the absoluteness of any content, for it is the absolute negativity of everything determinate. It determines from its own self."<sup>43</sup> Thus the law and putative absolute norms are not *given* to conscience. Rather, self-determining, self-assured conscience takes priority over all content and can negate anything definite. Hegel observes that "conscience is free from any content whatever; it absolves itself from any specific duty which is supposed to have the validity of law. In the strength of its own self-assurance it possesses the majesty of absolute autarchy, to

bind and to loose.”<sup>44</sup> The focus of conscience is not so much on the content of action as on the ‘how’ of acting. The right of conscience is the right of self-determination, the right to bind and loose whatever ethical norms and issues are under consideration. For the latter are relative to conscience, to the right of self-determination.

This does not mean that anything goes or that everything is permitted. Hegel believes that Fichte and especially Schlegel come perilously close to the nihilist position because they appear to interpret the relation between the self and its ethical content in a merely ironical fashion, to wit, “Whatever is, is only by the instrumentality of the ego, and what exists by my instrumentality I can equally well annihilate again.”<sup>45</sup> Hegel draws out the implications of this view:

If we stop at these absolute empty forms which originate from the absoluteness of the abstract ego, nothing is treated in and for itself as valuable in itself, but only as produced by the . . . I. But in that case the ego can remain lord and master of everything, and in no sphere of morals, law, things human and divine, profane and sacred, is there anything that would not first have to be laid down by the ego, and that therefore could not equally well be destroyed by it. Consequently, everything genuinely and independently real becomes only a show, not true and genuine on its own account or through itself, but a mere appearance due to the ego in whose power and caprice and at whose free disposal it remains.<sup>46</sup>

If conscience relativizes and subjectivizes all determinate ethical content, this might lead to relativism. The subjective turn of modernity, however, does not have to end in *subjectivism*. On the contrary, Hegel contends, “In a true ethic, subjectivity is suspended, whereas through moral consciousness of that kind the nullification of subjectivity is [nevertheless] conscious, so that in its very nullification subjectivity is held on to and saved. Virtue, in transforming itself into morality, necessarily becomes the knowledge of one’s own virtue, or in other words, it becomes pharasaism.”<sup>47</sup> In contrast to such ‘pharasaic’ self-righteous self-seeking, the conscientious self is supposed to act in a universal manner. It does not have self-seeking as its end nor does it call attention to itself qua particular in opposition to other

particulars. Acting in a universal manner means purposive acting that has regard for others as ends in themselves: "But when I really act, I am conscious of an already existing other, and of a reality that I want to bring about."<sup>48</sup> Morality, which is always in danger of falling into individualism, self-righteousness, and hypocrisy, is *aufgehoben* in ethical life. This *Aufhebung* does not mean that duties and obligations disappear. Hegel explains that "Conscience has not given up . . . duty; . . . duty is the essential moment of relating oneself, qua universality, to another."<sup>49</sup> That is, in acting one should judge and act not as an absolute particular but on behalf of and for all.<sup>50</sup> Acting universally involves communicability, respecting the other as an end in herself, to wit, recognition:

Conscience is the common element of the two self-consciousnesses, and this element is the substance in which the deed [*das Tun*] has an enduring reality, the moment of being recognized and acknowledged by others. The moral consciousness does not possess this moment of recognition by others, of pure consciousness, which has a real existence; and consequently does not act or actualize anything at all . . . . The action is thus only the translation of its individual content into the objective element, in which it is universal and recognized, and it is just this fact that it is recognized that makes the deed a reality.<sup>51</sup>

Conscience is the intersubjective completion of morality in reciprocal recognition. In the social mediation between universal and particular,

this distinction between universal consciousness and the individual self is just what has been superseded, and the supersession as such is conscience. The self's immediate knowing that is certain of itself is law and duty; . . . all that is required is that it should know this and state its conviction. The declaration of this assurance rids the form of particularity. . . . In calling itself conscience, it calls itself pure knowledge of itself, i.e., *it calls itself a universal knowing and willing which recognizes and acknowledges others . . . and for that reason is also recognized and acknowledged by them.*<sup>52</sup>

Does this mean that with the transition to conscience we have

reached the Promised Land of mutual recognition beyond the self-seeking pharasaism of morality? Not quite. Although the dualisms of morality have been overcome on one level, they reappear on the level of conscience. For there appear to be two types of conscience, the 'man of action' or acting conscience, and the 'beautiful soul' who judges the former. This shows that the opposition between universal and particular constitutive of morality also emerges in conscience. Particularity is represented by the man of action, while universality is represented by the judging conscience or beautiful soul. These two types of conscience enter into a higher-level struggle for recognition over the issues of judgment, confession, and forgiveness. Hegel's insight is that conscience is ambiguous, i.e., conscience can be either good or evil, and so is the root of both.

The analysis of conscience thus far is only a solution *in principle* to the antinomy of morality. Conscience itself develops an opposition between the beautiful soul and the active consciousness which, because it acts, has to deal with particularity. Each takes up a different attitude toward the pure universal cause (*die Sache selbst*) constitutive of conscience. The acting consciousness, by virtue of its action for the sake of the cause, has to make compromises that render the universal duty determinate with particularity. Such particularity and determinacy are inevitable because action is always particular. But the particularity and determinacy of the action are viewed by the ethical purist as corruptions. The actor's conscientious confession of his conviction of doing his duty appears to the judge as spurious or empty talk. He holds that the compromises of the man of action have reduced morality to mere words. In judging the man of action, the judge establishes a binary division (*Ur-teilen*) that clearly favors one side of that binary over the other, to wit, purity. He establishes a hierarchy of purity over action and identifies himself with purity. He thus destroys the community of conscientious selves.

But the ethical purist can achieve and preserve his purity only by abstaining from action. He becomes a beautiful soul too fine to act or commit himself to anything, fleeing actuality and expressing himself in fine sentiments. Thus the beautiful soul also in his own way reduces morality to mere words. Talk without deeds is not only

meaningless, it is hypocrisy. In seeking to preserve its moral purity by abstaining from action, the beautiful soul either vanishes or degenerates into moral hypocrisy when it condemns the actor as impure. Moreover, in presuming to judge the other, the beautiful soul places himself on the same level as the actor, i.e., establishes an unintended community of sorts between them, in spite of his constituting that community as a 'hierarchy of purity'.

In contrast, the person of action makes compromises that are, of necessity, impure.<sup>53</sup> For action is always particular. In response to the judgment of the other, he is led to make a confession. This confession implies that he seeks to incorporate the other's perspective into his own. It also implies a negation/renunciation of himself as a self-seeking particular. This is not primarily a confession of guilt, however, because from his own perspective he is not guilty. He is guilty from the perspective of the beautiful soul, i.e., insofar as he incorporates the latter perspective into his own. His confession is based on the perception that, in the very act of judging, the other (beautiful soul) has placed himself on the same level and this implies a common element between them. This common element is present in spite of the hierarchy which his judgment expresses. Stated differently, the confession is motivated by the actor's self-recognition in the other. He sees that both he and the beautiful soul can be regarded as impure and as hypocritical. Both are morally equivalent and this equivalence (*Gleichheit*) is what the actor senses. Moreover, he expects the other to acknowledge the equivalence as well. By confessing, the acting consciousness seeks recognition, i.e., he anticipates and expects a reciprocal confession and response. The acting consciousness, in confessing the necessary imperfections of his compromises, shows that he recognizes the ethical universal. This act of confessing also demonstrates respect for the other's judgment. On the basis of their equivalence, the acting consciousness reaches out and seeks to reestablish the community between them that the other's judgment had sundered.

The ethical purist, however, denies any such equivalence or community and he refuses the confession. In Hegel's words,

the confession of the one who is wicked, "I am so," is not followed by a reciprocal similar confession. This was not what the judging

consciousness meant: quite the contrary. It repels this community from itself and becomes the hard heart that exists purely for itself and rejects any continuity with the other.<sup>54</sup>

This refusal of reciprocal recognition Hegel characterizes as the highest resentment and rebellion (*Empörung*) of self-certain, self-assured spirit.<sup>55</sup> In seeking to maintain his 'universal' moral purity, the purist in fact shows himself to be a stubborn particular who refuses to recognize the other, and refuses any community with the other. This is a return to 'master/slave', not founded on violence but on self-righteous moral purity.

Like master/slave, the inequality inherent in this hard-hearted refusal of recognition undergoes a reversal.<sup>56</sup> The penitent sees himself repulsed but discovers that the 'pure one' is in the wrong. The one who preserves his purity by abstaining from action wastes away yearning for recognition. But in hypocritically condemning the actor for doing what the 'pure one' fails to do, he shows himself to be neither pure nor universal but a stubborn particular and so forfeits the very purity to which he clings.<sup>57</sup> His quest for purity is thus unmasked as "a consciousness which is forsaken by and which itself denies spirit. For it does not know that spirit . . . is lord and master over every deed and actuality, and can cast them off, making them as if they never had happened."<sup>58</sup>

The failure of unequal recognition can be remedied. The wounds of the spirit can heal without leaving scars.<sup>59</sup> Reciprocal recognition can occur if each "gives a little" (determinate negation). The evil man of action has already confessed to the other; now the pure beautiful soul must negate himself and overcome his hard-hearted rigidity. He must set aside his one-sided judgment on the actor and his refusal of any equivalence between them. In short, each can attain its self-recognition in the other only by a mutual act of forgiveness: "The word of reconciliation is the objectively existing *Geist*, which beholds the pure knowledge of itself qua universal consciousness in and through its opposite. . . . [This is] *a reciprocal recognition which is the absolute Geist*."<sup>60</sup> It is difficult to overestimate the significance of the preceding passage. It is the first explicit instance of *reciprocal* recognition and absolute *Geist* in the *Phenomenology*. Forgiveness is the

ultimate shape assumed by reciprocal recognition; forgiveness effects a release (*Freigabe*) from the past, from the terrible self-righteousness of morality. Spirit can be lord and master over the deed because spirit can annul time, can make the deed as if it had never happened. Thus a new beginning is possible. Forgiveness as a reciprocal recognition that is the absolute spirit anticipates the twin themes with which the *Phenomenology* concludes, namely, the Golgotha that marks the sufferings of absolute spirit, and Schiller's poem on Friendship, which celebrates the restoration of community: "Both together, history comprehended, form at once the recollection and the Golgotha of absolute spirit, the reality, the truth, the certainty of its throne, without which it were lifeless, solitary and alone. Only,

From the chalice of this realm of spirits  
Foams forth to God his own infinitude."<sup>61</sup>

## NOTES

1. A thematic concept is one that is explicitly coined and thematized by an author. An operative concept is a concept used by an author to explain and elaborate his thematic concept. An operative concept is a medium through and by means of which another concept is developed as a theme. Cf. Eugen Fink, "Operative Concepts in Husserl's *Phenomenology*," (trans. Wm. McKenna, in *A Priori and World: European Contributions to Husserlian Phenomenology*, ed. W. McKenna, R. M. Harlan, and L. E. Winters (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1981), pp. 56–70.

2. Jürgen Habermas interprets Hegel's thought as a philosophy of the subject from his early "Labor and Interaction: Remarks on Hegel's Jena Philosophy of Spirit" (in *Theory and Practice*, trans. John Viertel [Boston: Beacon Press 1974], pp. 142–69) to his more recent *Philosophical Discourse of Modernity*, trans. F. Lawrence (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1987). Robert C. Solomon interprets the concept of spirit as a successor version of transcendental philosophy and transcendental ego. ("Hegel's Concept of *Geist*," in *Hegel: A Collection of Critical Essays*, ed. A. MacIntyre [New York: Doubleday Anchor, 1972], pp. 125–49.)

3. See Robert R. Williams, *Recognition: Fichte and Hegel on the Other* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1992), pp. 103–12; Robert R.



Williams, "Hegel and Skepticism," *Owl of Minerva* 24, no. 1 (fall 1992): 71–82. See also Michael Forster, *Hegel and Skepticism* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1989).

4. Kojève made this discussion central to his entire reading and interpretation of Hegel and the *Phenomenology*. See Alexandre Kojève, *Introduction to the Reading of Hegel*, ed. Allan Bloom, trans. J. H. Nichols Jr. (New York: Basic Books, 1969).

5. Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, *Phänomenologie des Geistes*, ed. Johannes Hoffmeister (Hamburg: Meiner Verlag, 1952), hereafter cited as PhG, pp. 318–19. English translation: *Phenomenology of Spirit*, trans. A. V. Miller (Oxford University Press, 1977) §445; hereafter cited as ET. All translations are my own.

6. PhG, p. 139. Emphasis in original. ET, §174.

7. PhG, pp. 109–10. ET, §178, p. 111. Translation taken from Robert R. Williams, *Fichte and Hegel on the Other*, p. 149.

8. The German term is *Verdoppelung*. Miller and Baillie both translate it as 'duplication'. But duplication suggests that the other is a copy of the one, which implies that it is derivative from a first or primal ego. When 'my' ego is identified as primordial, the road is open to Cartesianism. This tends to reduce the other to the same. However, for Hegel, the other is not a copy or duplicate but another member of the same species which exists as a plurality of individuals. Hegel's claim is not that consciousness doubles, but rather that the living species itself doubles, i.e., is a one and a many.

9. Ludwig Siep, *Anerkennung als Prinzip der praktischen Philosophie* (Freiburg: Alber Verlag, 1978), p. 137. Italics mine. Hereafter cited as APP.

10. Ibid., p. 138.

11. This sketch is based on PhG, pp. 141–42, paragraphs 1–7; ET, §§178–84, pp. 111–12. This is a general analysis of the concept of recognition that precedes the more determinate example of 'master and slave.' For a fuller discussion, see Williams, *Recognition: Fichte and Hegel on the Other*, chap. 7.

12. PhG, p. 142; ET, §181, p. 111. This letting the other go free is reminiscent of *Gelassenheit*. Cf. Reiner Schürmann, *Meister Eckhart* [*Studies in Phenomenology and Existential Philosophy*] (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1978), pp. 113, 190, 245.

13. Ludwig Siep, "Der Freiheitsbegriff der praktischen Philosophie Hegels in Jena," in *Praktische Philosophie im Deutschen Idealismus* (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1992): 159–71.

14. PhG, p. 146; ET, §190.

15. PhG, pp. 147–48; ET, §192.

16. PhG, pp. 147–48; ET, §193.

17. PhG, p. 148; ET, §194. Kojève has no trouble in demonstrating that Hegel anticipates Heidegger's existential analysis of finitude and that in certain respects Hegel's analysis is superior in that it situates death anxiety in a socio-ontological matrix. On the ontological level, *Dasein* is being toward death, but it is the master who brings this ontological possibility to light and plays it against the slave.

18. PhG, p. 148; ET, §196.

19. Ibid.

20. PhG, p. 149; ET, §196.

21. Georg Friedrich Wilhelm Hegel, *Elements of the Philosophy of Right*, ed. Allen W. Wood, trans. by H. Nisbet (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), §57 Zusatz.

22. See Williams, *Hegel's Ethics of Recognition* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998), chap. 10.

23. See H. S. Harris, introduction to *Hegel: System of Ethical Life* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1979), pp. 42–44. Cf. Hegel, *Philosophy of Right*, §158 Zusatz.

24. PhG, p. 324; ET, §456.

25. Patricia J. Mills, "Hegel and the Woman Question: Recognition and Intersubjectivity," in *The Sexism of Social and Political Theory: Women and Reproduction from Plato to Nietzsche*, ed. L. Mg. Clark and L. Lange (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1979), pp. 74–98.

26. PhG, p. 326; ET, §457.

27. For a discussion of Mills's analysis, see Williams, *Hegel's Ethics of Recognition*, pp. 380–89.

28. "[I]n so far as it is ethical [her] particularity is a matter of indifference, and the wife is without the moment of knowing herself as this particular individual in the other partner. The brother, however, is for the sister a passive, similar being in general; the recognition of herself in him is pure and unmixed with any natural desire. . . . [T]he moment of the individual self, recognizing and being recognized, can here assert its right, because it is linked to the equilibrium of the blood and is a relation devoid of desire. The loss of the brother is therefore irreparable to the sister, and her duty toward him is the highest." PhG, pp. 326–27; ET, §457.

29. PhG, p. 315; ET, §441, p. 265.

30. PhG, p. 317; ET, §445.

31. PhG, p. 311; ET, §437. Italics in original.

32. PhG, p. 317; ET, §445.

33. PhG, p. 332; ET, §466, p. 280.

34. These characters relate to each other primarily on the first level or phase of recognition; see above.

35. PhG, p. 336; ET, §470, p. 284.

36. Martin Donougho comments that “despite her universality of purpose (*pace* Goethe and others) [Antigone] has revealed the individualism—the particularity at the foundations of the polis. . . . What she uncovers is the individualism at the heart of the polis, its male chauvinism, its overemphasis on the male principle, its pretence that this is universal and natural” (Martin Donougho, “The Woman in White: On the Reception of Hegel’s Antigone,” in *Owl of Minerva*, 21, no. 1 (Fall 1989): 85–86). Antigone reveals the allegedly common *Sittlichkeit* to be a Warrior ethic, which is not only in conflict with the family, but is founded on force and will perish by force.

37. For this reason, Hegel believes that Antigone and Socrates, both of whom insist upon the right of subjective freedom and conscience, represent the irruption of a higher principle into the ancient world, which it cannot recognize and which it excludes. Hence both are punished and put to death.

38. PhG, p. 445; ET, §§616–32. For the antinomy, that moral consciousness both is and is not, cf. §632.

39. PhG, p. 450; ET, §640, p. 388.

40. PhG, p. 448; ET, §637, p. 386.

41. PhG, p. 446; ET, §633, p. 384.

42. PhG, p. 449; ET, §639, p. 387.

43. PhG, p. 453; ET, §643, p. 390.

44. PhG, p. 456; ET, §646, p. 393.

45. Georg Friedrich Wilhelm Hegel, *Aesthetics: Lectures on Fine Art*, trans. T. M. Knox (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1975), vol. 1, p. 64.

46. Ibid., pp. 64–65.

47. Georg Friedrich Wilhelm Hegel, *Faith and Knowledge*, trans. W. Cerf and H. S. Harris (Albany: SUNY Press, 1977), p. 184.

48. ET, §637, p. 386.

49. PhG, p. 450; ET, §640, p. 388.

50. Morality thus is a struggle against *Begierde* and its patterns of satisfaction, carried out on a higher level. Hegel sees that owing to its abstractness, morality can succumb to *Begierde*, i.e., it becomes self-righteousness and pharasaism.

51. PhG, p. 450; ET, §640, p. 388.

52. PhG, p. 460; ET, §654, italics mine. Hegel here emphasizes the

importance of language as the *Dasein des Geistes* (PhG, p. 458; ET, §654). Unlike sense certainty and the unwritten divine law, conscience as intersubjective can, must, and does find linguistic expression. Language is the explicit medium of intersubjectivity, "the middle term, mediating between the independent and the recognized consciousnesses, and the existing self is immediately in a condition of universal recognition and acknowledgement. . . ." (PhG, p. 459; ET, 396)

53. PhG, pp. 463ff; ET, §§659–60.

54. PhG p. 469; ET §667, p. 405.

55. Ibid.

56. PhG, p. 469; ET, §667.

57. PhG, p. 470; ET, §668.

58. Ibid.; ET, §667.

59. Ibid.

60. PhG, p. 471; ET, §670. Emphasis mine.

61. PhG, p. 564; I follow Baillie rather than Miller here. *Phenomenology of Mind*, trans. J. B. Baillie (London: G. Allen and Unwin; New York: Humanities, 1971), p. 808.

### 3

# “KNOWLEDGE SHOT FROM A PISTOL”?

DALE E. SNOW

In keeping with the idea that what one criticizes in others is often a weakness or fault of one's own, disguised and then projected onto the other, I examine several of the more infamous of Hegel's criticisms of Schelling in the preface and suggest that their profile casts a surprising light on Hegel's own claims about his starting point in philosophy and in the *Phenomenology*.

It must be noted at the outset that strictly speaking, there are no criticisms of Schelling in the preface; indeed, we have Hegel's word for it. In his letter to Schelling of 1 May 1807, promising a copy of the *Phenomenology* as soon as it becomes available, Hegel writes as if he were genuinely interested in the reaction of his old friend to his latest work, indeed assuring him that it is his opinion that he values above all others: "I am curious to know what you will say about the idea of this first part. . . . In the preface you will not find that I have been unduly hard upon the shallowness that [makes] so much mischief with your forms especially, and which drags your science down into a cold formalism."<sup>1</sup>

Schelling's diffident reply, once he had read the preface, shows that he found Hegel's explanation somewhat less than completely

satisfactory: "I would have to think too little of myself to connect this polemic with me personally. It must, therefore, only ever bear upon the misuse [of my concepts] and upon the chatter of imitators, as you declared in your letter to me, although in the essay itself, this distinction is not made"<sup>2</sup>—"as it properly should have been," we can almost hear him adding. The rest of the letter is not particularly combative in tone; in fact, Schelling writes as if all their differences might be reconciled, save one (I will return to that one important disagreement later). Whether or not their friendship had already begun to wane (they had not corresponded for several years), it seemed to come to a permanent end with Schelling's last letter, to which Hegel never responded. Yet it is still possible to wonder whether Hegel was being disingenuous.

Certainly there was evidence, well before the publication of the *Phenomenology*, of Hegel's increasing impatience with 'formalism,' possibly from as early as the winter semester of 1804–1805, in the context of a denunciation of the use of foreign terms in philosophy: "This foreign terminology, sometimes unnecessarily employed, sometimes just incorrectly, is becoming . . . a great evil in that it renders concepts which are *dynamic* in themselves into something *fixed* and *static*, whereby the spirit and the life of the matter disappears and philosophy degenerates into an empty *formalism*, which is very easy to acquire and prattle about; however, to those who do not understand this terminology, it seems very difficult and deep."<sup>3</sup>

According to Karl Rosenkranz, the excesses of both Schelling's followers and the Romantics were a frequent target of Hegel's, but he was also known to make a careful distinction between Schelling and those he criticized: "When I speak of this terminology and its use, as it is presently spreading, . . . I know very well how to distinguish Schelling's ideas from the uses his school makes of them, and I honor Schelling's genuine service to philosophy just as much as I despise this formalism; because I know Schelling's philosophy, I know its genuine Idea, as it has reawakened in our time, is independent of this formalism."<sup>4</sup>

So in some sense Hegel was sincere in his letter of 1 May. He had also been critical for quite some time of the excesses of those of

Schelling's followers who were more in love with their jargon than with truth and had tried to distinguish them from Schelling. One might say that his honesty was of the letter, but not the spirit, for the criticisms of Schelling Hegel makes elsewhere, such as in the 1805–1806 lectures on the history of philosophy, are both substantive and clearly the forerunners to those in the preface. I will discuss the preface's three interrelated criticisms: the nature of science and the false path formalism represents (section 14); the conception of the Absolute, infamous as the night in which all cows are black (section 16); and the decided difference between the significance of the issues raised by these first two related criticisms and what I will call the problem of the scientific character of knowledge, involving Hegel's stress on the contrast of a measured, even laborious production of true scientific knowledge with "knowledge as if shot from a pistol."<sup>5</sup>

## **I. PROBLEM OF FORMALISM**

In section 11, Hegel declares that "ours is a birth-time and a period of transition to a new era" which, inasmuch as it marks the transition from a long process of quantitative change to a qualitative leap, like the birth of a child, presents a unique challenge to the understanding. This new world temporarily frustrates efforts to grasp it:

Consciousness misses in the newly emerging shape its former range and specificity of content, and even more the articulation of form whereby distinctions are securely defined, and stand arrayed in their fixed relations. Without such articulation, Science lacks universal intelligibility, and gives the appearance of being the esoteric possession of a few individuals: an esoteric possession, since it is as yet present only in its Notion or in its inwardness; of a few individuals, since its undiffused manifestation makes its existence something singular.<sup>6</sup>

The apparent appropriation of Science by the few is then a historical accident, destined to be of limited duration and overcome in the full-

ness of time, for a genuine science is "exoteric, comprehensible, and capable of being learned and appropriated by all. The intelligible form of Science is the way open and equally accessible to everyone. . . ."

Hegel goes on to explain that scientific culture is at present struggling with a conundrum: the very profusion of material to be mastered renders an all-encompassing grasp of the whole vitally necessary, yet the Absolute which would be capable of containing all seems to render vague and imprecise the myriad of what it contains: "One side insists on the wealth of material and intelligibility; the other side at the very least, scorns intelligibility and insists on immediate rationality and divinity."<sup>7</sup> Of course, a mature Science could meet both demands, but at present these irreconcilable emphases have obscured this possibility; instead, the side boasting the great wealth of material, having further adorned itself with "rare and exotic instances," is now claiming to be that all-encompassing and mature Science the age calls for. "But," says Hegel, "a closer inspection shows that this expansion has not come about through one and the same principle having spontaneously assumed different shapes, but rather through the shapeless repetition of one and the same formula, only externally applied to diverse materials. . . ."<sup>8</sup>

The Idea is not developed, since a mindless application by the knowing subject of the same form accomplishes nothing real. Rather than a self-originating process of change, which is what is needed, this is but an externally imposed differentiation, a "monochromatic formalism." Hegel observes gloomily:

Nowadays we see all value ascribed to the universal Idea in this non-actual form, and the undoing of all distinct, determinate entities (or rather the hurling of them all into the abyss of vacuity without further development or any justification) is allowed to pass muster as the speculative mode of treatment. Dealing with something from the perspective of the Absolute consists merely in declaring that, although one has been speaking of it just now as something definite, yet in the Absolute, the  $A = A$ , there is nothing of the kind, for there all is one. To pit this single insight, that in the Absolute everything is the same, against the full body of articulated cognition, which at least seeks and demands such fulfillment, to palm off its



Absolute as the night in which, as the saying goes, all cows are black—this is cognition naively reduced to vacuity.<sup>9</sup>

Is this criticism really aimed at Schelling's identity philosophy? H. S. Harris argues that it is not; he traces the uses of variants of this expression, and the image of night as a generative principle more generally, in works by Jean Paul, Friedrich Schlegel, and even Schelling himself.<sup>10</sup> The heart of his argument is a detailed effort to distinguish among the various targets of Hegel's references to negative, positive, schematizing, monochromatic, and bichromatic formalism, which I will not recapitulate here. Harris concludes, by appeal to the language of Hegel's earlier critical essays, that "the echoes in the *Phenomenology* are clear enough to put the identification of Reinhold and Bardili as the 'formalists' of the 'dark night' beyond any doubt."<sup>11</sup> He points above all to the words "the shapeless repetition of one and the same" (*gestaltlose Wiederholung des Einen und Desselben*) and Hegel's discussion of Reinhold's reduction of philosophy to logic in the *Difference Essay*: "the infinite repeatability of one and the very same, and through One and the very Same" (*die unendliche Wiederholbarkeit von Einem und ebendemselben, in Einem und demselben, und durch Einem und Ebendasselbe*).<sup>12</sup>

I would add that the overall picture of intellectual sterility and mechanical application of a single principle certainly seems more applicable to Reinhold, whose entire philosophical career was characterized by a fondness for single principles of explanation, whether it was the *Vorstellungsvermögen* of the early *Elementar-philosophie* or the later Reinhold's concept of the *Urwahre*, which Harris focuses on.

When Michael Vater discusses this problem and these texts, his approach is different; he agrees that the "dark night" joke is puzzling in its inaccuracy and unfairness if applied to Schelling. He demonstrates, with reference to the chronology of Schelling's and Hegel's years of closest collaboration and the time of the composition of the *Bruno* and the *Fernere Darstellungen*, that Hegel knew, "or at least he should have, that Schelling's was a philosophy of night and day, that he was committed to the inclusive unity of all things in the absolute and to their separated individuated existence as an image of that inclusive unity."<sup>13</sup> Yet Vater concludes that "whether the dark

night formalist is Schelling or Reinhold is of interest, in the end, only at the level of gossip" and the attempt to discover what or who Hegel was "for" or "against" blinds us to Hegel's real purpose in the preface.<sup>14</sup>

I can agree only in part; there is a conclusion implicit in the preface over and above its many explicit arguments, accusations, and criticisms. That conclusion is that the philosophy of Hegel's time had failed to do what philosophy must do: become scientific. The omission of any direct mention of Schelling from the preface did not mean that he was not included among those criticized, as a generous reading of Hegel's letter of 1 May 1807 might seem to imply, but rather that he was included, as Horst Fuhrmans has pointed out:

Schelling indeed is not named, but that he is not named is attack enough. Since the philosophizing of the time to a great extent was influenced by Schelling, and he was regarded as the leading thinker of the time, not naming [him] was already a condemnation. Otherwise would not Schelling have had to be named as at least a praiseworthy exception given the times? As one of those who had faithfully protected the scientific character of philosophy? That did not happen: all the philosophy of the time was condemned.<sup>15</sup>

## 2. PROBLEM OF THE SCIENTIFIC CHARACTER OF KNOWLEDGE

I agree both that the preponderance of the evidence probably indicates that Hegel genuinely did not mean to be implying a veiled criticism of Schelling in his criticism of formalism and the "dark night" of the Absolute, and that the identity of those criticized in that connection does not make any very crucial difference to the argument of the preface. However, the basis of my conclusion is different: without disputing the validity of any of the evidence cited by Vater or Harris, I believe that the criticism of the simple-minded, uninspired-sounding formalist, with his relentless repetition of "the shapeless one and the same" is simply incompatible with the criticism of the genius who has the gift of intellectual intuition, who arrives at his

destination in a flash, that appears to me to be the most unquestionably aimed at Schelling. The slow-witted, doggedly determined formalist, applying his method heedless of appropriateness to all and sundry, can hardly be identical with the rapturous one who shoots his knowledge as if from a pistol; and it seems to me that it is here, hidden behind the mockery of the image, that Hegel makes his most revealing criticism.

What is the import of this insult? Hegel understands the *Phenomenology* to be the description of the coming-to-be of Science as such, or knowledge.

In order to become genuine knowledge, to beget the element of Science which is the pure Notion of Science itself, it must travel a long way and work its passage. This process of coming-to-be will not be what is commonly understood by an initiation of the unscientific consciousness into Science;<sup>16</sup> it will also be quite different from the 'foundation' of Science;<sup>17</sup> least of all will it be like the rapturous enthusiasm which, like a shot from a pistol, begins straight-away with absolute knowledge.<sup>18</sup>

Not to put too fine a point on it, but Hegel is accusing Schelling of not working hard enough. He has taken the shortcut of intellectual intuition.

The background of this argument is best known from its more detailed presentation in the *Lectures on the History of Philosophy*, but the discussion is rendered somewhat problematic by the difficulty of establishing in what form the lectures were given in 1805–1806.<sup>19</sup> Still, it seems clear that Hegel always located the origin of the regrettable tendency to appeal to "immediate intellectual knowledge"<sup>20</sup> in Jacobi. As early as 1802, in *Faith and Knowledge*, Hegel had claimed in his discussion of Schleiermacher, whose *Speeches* he regarded as the highest point to which "the Jacobian principle" had risen, that intuition was too particular and subjective a basis on which to establish the religious community.<sup>21</sup>

This illegitimate form of knowledge took on its most troublesome form in Schelling, however, since Schelling's intellectual intuition involved the ability to posit thinking and being as a unity, and

this claim, as Hegel saw it, carries with it the consequence that "philosophy thus appears an artistic talent of genius that comes only to 'Sunday's children.'" <sup>22</sup> It is therefore obvious, in Hegel's view, that the philosophy of Schelling is willing to abdicate the claim to be universal, inasmuch as it relies upon a special power of the imagination. How much of this polemic was presented in this form in 1805–1806 is hard to say.

Other writings of Hegel's from the Jena period give a different emphasis to the same set of accusations. In the *Wastebook*, under the heading *Wissenschaft*, Hegel reflects on the increasingly brief life cycle of the recent systems of philosophy: the Wolffian, the Kantian, the Fichtean:

What Schellingian philosophy is in its essence will be revealed in short order. The judgment of it is at hand, for many already understand it. Yet these philosophies [i.e., the Kantian, Fichtean, Schellingian] are defeated less by proofs than the empirical experience of how far they extend. Blindly, the followers are educated [in them], but the fabric grows thinner and thinner and finally they are surprised to find it as transparent as a spider's web. It has melted away from them like ice, eluded their grasp like quicksilver, without them knowing how it has happened. They simply do not have it any longer, and whoever looks at the hand with which they offer their wisdom sees nothing but the empty hand, and jeers. <sup>23</sup>

The proof is in the tasting of the pudding, Hegel seems to be saying; Schelling's philosophy and indeed those of his predecessors fail to explain the empirical. These claims, that Schelling is unscientific and unable to explain the real, are the most projective and quixotic of Hegel's criticisms because they apply to a much greater extent to him. This is indeed the kernel of the later Schelling's polemic against Hegel and "negative philosophy."

Even Schelling's musings in his last letter to Hegel on the one irreconcilable difference he saw remaining between them show that he found the distance between them to be the result of a change on Hegel's part: "I admit that I have not yet [after reading the preface] understood your intention in opposing the *concept* to intuition. By

the concept, however, you cannot mean anything else than what you and I have called Idea, the nature of which is precisely to have one side from which it is concept, and one from which it is intuition."<sup>24</sup> Hegel's claims in the preface about the scientific character of philosophy all presuppose a certain concept of the Absolute as "the essence consummating itself through its development. Of the Absolute it must be said that it is essentially a *result*, that only in the *end* is it what it truly is; and that precisely in this consists its nature, viz., to be actual, subject, the spontaneous becoming of itself."<sup>25</sup> Hegel's development of the reflective unfolding of relationships, the history of this "spontaneous becoming" which is the *Phenomenology*, is no less knowledge "shot from a pistol"; indeed, the target has been named and declared. The relationship of his parade of concepts to the real has been equally extensively criticized. The faults we see in others remain those we are most familiar with in ourselves.<sup>26</sup>

To begin with the claim that "the true shape in which truth exists can only be the scientific system of such truth"<sup>27</sup> is to make the reader a kind of advance promise: the presentation of the *Phenomenology* has to succeed in establishing the true concept of science by demonstrating how it is done. Lest we suspect that presuppositions are being illegitimately smuggled in during the process, Hegel states, "The basis or principle of the system is in fact, only its *beginning*."<sup>28</sup> That Substance is essentially Subject, expressed in the representation of Absolute as Spirit, according to Hegel the most sublime notion of the modern age, takes place in a three-fold development. This being in-and-for-itself is at first only for us (immediacy); it must become this also for itself (Reflection); and finally, in its existence for itself, an object reflected into itself. This is the "Spirit that, so developed, knows itself as Spirit [and] is *Science*."<sup>29</sup>

This tortuous development is what arises out of the first, immediate stage: "Pure self-recognition in absolute otherness, this Aether as such, is the ground and soil of science." Hegel continues, "The *beginning* of philosophy presupposes or requires that consciousness should dwell in this *element*. But this element itself achieves its own perfection and transparency only through the movement of its becoming."<sup>30</sup> This movement from the "beginning" to the "perfection" is the object of

the criticism Schelling makes in the *Munich Lectures on the History of Modern Philosophy*: this line of thought contains an

illusion . . . in that one falsely pretends that thought is driven onward only by means of a self-contained necessity, although it obviously still has a goal toward which it strives, and which, the more the one philosophizing tries to conceal from himself his awareness of it, all the more decisively influences the path of philosophy in an unconscious way.<sup>31</sup>

Hegel is assuming what he is claiming to be on the way to proving. He tells us in §20, by way of elucidating the claim that the true is the whole, that “the whole is nothing other than the essence consummating itself through its development.” And we know how this consummation is supposed to proceed, at least in outline: an in-itself can become a for-itself for us, but it can only do so if already at the level of the in-itself some element of for-itself already existed as the condition of the possibility for the final level of self-knowledge. As Manfred Frank, who has devoted a great deal of thought to this topic, puts it: “To present this circle as an irreducible fact<sup>32</sup> does not mean to explain the presupposition, but rather to render its employment invisible.”<sup>33</sup>

Once Hegel had opposed the concept to the intuition, as Schelling pointed out in his letter, he had moved away from their shared view (“what you and I have called Idea, the nature of which is precisely to have one side from which it is concept, and one from which it is intuition”). Perhaps this is part of the reason why Hegel addresses the status of reflection so explicitly in the preface: “Reason is therefore misunderstood when reflection is excluded from the True, and is not grasped as a positive moment of the absolute.”<sup>34</sup> Certainly the early Schelling grappled long and unsuccessfully with the problem of explaining how any differentiation was possible in the Identity Philosophy. However, when a separation or opposition is assumed, then it becomes perilously difficult indeed to maintain that the object can become subject, Substance become Subject (to hegelianize it), unless it was in some sense already Subject—but this is to return to an identity of concept and intuition.

## NOTES

1. Friedrich Wilhelm Joseph Schelling, *Briefe und Dokumente*. Bd. 3: 1803–1809, Zusatzband, ed. H. Fuhrmans (Bonn: Bouvier Verlag, 1975), pp. 431–32.

2. (2 November 1807) *Briefe und Dokumente* 3, p. 471.

3. "Diese fremde Terminologie, die teils unnützer, teils verkehrter Weise gebraucht wird, wird aber ein grosses Übel dadurch, dass sie die Begriffe, welche an sich *Bewegung* sind, zu etwas *festem* und *Fixiertem* macht, wodurch der Geist und das Leben der Sache selbst verschwindet und die Philosophie zu einem leeren *Formalismus* herabsinkt, welchen sich anzuschaffen und darin zu schwatzen nichts leichter ist; denen aber, die diese Terminologie nicht verstehen, scheint es sehr schwer und tief zu sein." See Karl Rosenkranz, *Hegels Leben* (Berlin, 1844), p. 181; Johannes Hoffmeister, *Dokumente zu Hegels Entwicklung* (Stuttgart-Bad Cannstatt: Frommann-Holzboog, 1936), p. 340. See also G. W. F. Hegel, *System of Ethical Life* (1802–3), trans. H. S. Harris and T. M. Knox (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1979), p. 258.

4. "Wenn ich von diesem Terminologie und ihrem Gebrauch, wie er gegenwärtig grassiert, so spreche . . . so weiss ich übrigens Schellings Ideen sehr wohl von dem Gebrauch, den seine Schüler davon machen, zu unterscheiden und ich ehre Schellings wahrhafte Verdienst um die Philosophie ebenso sehr als ich diesen Formalismus verachte; und weil ich Schellings Philosophie kenne, weiss ich, dass ihre wahrhafte Idee, welche sie in unserer Zeit wieder erweckt, unabhängig von diesem Formalismus ist." Hoffmeister, *Dokumente*, pp. 341–42; Harris and Knox, *System*, p. 259.

5. Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, *Phänomenologie des Geistes*, ed. Johannes Hoffmeister (Hamburg: Meiner Verlag 1952), hereafter cited as PhG, p. 26. English translation: *Phenomenology of Spirit*, trans. A. V. Miller (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977), §27; hereafter cited as ET.

6. PhG, p. 17; ET, §13.

7. PhG, p. 17; ET, §14; Quentin Lauer suggests that the "one side" reference is Fichte, and the "other side" is Schelling: see *A Reading of Hegel's Phenomenology of Spirit* (New York: Fordham University Press, 1976), p. 275.

8. PhG, p. 18; ET, §15.

9. PhG, pp. 18–19; ET, §16.

10. "The Cows in the Dark Night," *Dialogue* 26 (1987): 628–29.

11. *Ibid.*, 634.

12. Harris observes that this formula is quoted directly from Reinhold, and it recurs several times in Hegel's discussion of Reinhold: "[H]e uses it always as a sort of recognition signal. It is meant to serve in that function in the *Phenomenology*." Ibid., p. 634, n. 18.

13. "Hymns to the Night: On H. S. Harris's 'The Cows in the Dark Night,'" *Dialogue* 26 (1987): 646. Manfred Frank likewise suggests that Hegel's "Bilder" in the preface "haben Schellingsche Vorbilder—übrigens so häufig aus den Ferneren Darstellungen, daß man vermuten könnte, Hegel habe diese Schrift bei der Niederschrift der Vorrede benutzt." *Der Unendliche Mangel an Sein* (Munich: Wilhelm Fink Verlag), 1992, p. 152, n. 6.

14. Vater, "Hymns to the Night," p. 651.

15. "Schelling wurde zwar nicht genannt, aber diese Nichtnennung allein war Angriff genug. Denn da das Philosophieren der damaligen Zeit weithin im Zeichen Schellings stand, und er als der führende Kopf der Zeit galt, war schon Nichtnennung Verurteilung. Hätte nicht sonst wenigstens Schelling als rühmende Ausnahme im Verfall der Zeit genannt werden müssen? Als einer derer, die tröstlich die Wissenschaftlichkeit der Philosophie bewahrt hatten? Das geschah nicht: alle Philosophie der Zeit wurde verurteilt." Friedrich Wilhelm Joseph Schelling, *Briefe und Dokumente*, Bd. 1: 1775–1809, ed. Horst Fuhrmans (Bonn: Bouvier Verlag, 1962), p. 509.

16. Kant.

17. Fichte.

18. PhG, p. 26; ET, §27.

19. The following is based on the Michelet edition, trans. E. S. Haldane and Frances Simson (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1974), since Michelet had access to the Jena manuscript of the 1805–1806 lectures.

20. Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, *Lectures on the History of Philosophy*, vol. 3, ed. Robert Brown, trans. R. F. Brown and J. M. Stewart (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990), p. 417.

21. *Glauben und Wissen*, in *Gesammelte Werke*, Bd. 4: Jenaer kritische Schriften, ed. H. Büchner and O. Pöggeler (Hamburg: Meiner Verlag, 1968), pp. 385–86.

22. The *Sonntagskinder* formulation does not appear until the lectures of 1825–1826; see Hegel, *Lectures on the History of Philosophy*, vol. 3, p. 261.

23. "Was Schelling'sche Philosophie in ihrem Wesen ist, wird kurze Zeit offenbaren. Das Gericht über sie steht gleichsam vor der Tür, denn Viele verstehen sie schon. Doch erlagen diese Philosophien weniger dem



Beweise, als der empirischen Erfahrung, wie weit mit ihnen zu kommen ist. Blind bilden sie die Anhänger aus, aber das Gewebe wird immer dünner und endlich finden sie sich von der Spinnwebendurchsichtigkeit überrascht. Es ist ihnen wie Eis geschmolzen und wie Quecksilber durch die Finger gelaufen, ohne dass sie wüssten, wie ihnen geschah. Sie haben's eben nicht mehr und wer ihnen in die Hand sieht, mit der sie ihren Weisheit ausboten, sieht nichts als die leere Hand und geht mit Gespött weiter"; "Aphorismen aus der Jenaer Zeit" (Nr. 40); Johannes Hoffmeister, *Dokumente*, p. 361.

24. "So bekenne ich, bis jetzt Deinen Sinn nicht zu begreifen, in dem Du den Begriff der Anschauung opponirst. Du kannst unter jenem doch nichts anderes meinen, als was Du und ich Idee genannt haben, deren Nature es ist, eine Seite zu haben, von der sie Begriff, und eine von der sie Anschauung ist." (2 November 1807) *Briefe und Dokumente*, vol. 3, p. 472.

25. PhG, p. 21; ET, §20.

26. See Harris's observation in connection with Hegel's attack on romantic religious enthusiasm in §7 of the preface: In the attack on Herder, who like Schelling and Hegel was a defender of Spinoza, "the general pattern of the attack [is confirmed]. Hegel is interested in his own earlier self—and hence in those with whom he has sympathized, and to whom he is indebted." H. S. Harris, *Hegel's Ladder*, vol. 1, *The Pilgrimage of Reason* (Indianapolis and Cambridge: Hackett, 1997), p. 45.

27. PhG, p. 12; ET, §5.

28. PhG, pp. 23–24; ET, §24.

29. PhG, p. 24; ET, §25.

30. PhG, pp. 24–26; ET, §26.

31. "Täuschung . . . indem man sich vorspiegelt, der Gedanke werde nur durch eine in ihm selbst liegende Notwendigkeit weiter getrieben, während er doch offenbar ein Ziel hat, nach welchem er hinstrebt, und das, wenn der Philosophierende auch noch so sehr dessen Bewusstseyn sich zu verbergen sucht, darum nur um so entschiedener bewusstlos auf den Gang des Philosophirens einwirkt." F. W. J. Schelling, *Sämtliche Werke*, ed. K. F. A. Schelling (Stuttgart and Augsburg: J. G. Cotta, 1856–1862), vol. 10, p. 132.

32. PhG, p. 21; ET, §20.

33. "Diesen Zirkel für ein irreduzibles Faktum auszugeben [PhG, p. 20; ET, §18] hieße, die Voraussetzung nicht einholen, sondern ihre Inanspruchnahme unmerklich machen." *Der unendliche Mangel an Sein*, p. 160.

34. PhG, pp. 21–22; ET, §2.



## 4

# IN THE SPIRIT OF HEGEL'S *PHENOMENOLOGY* *Heidegger and Fink*

ALFRED DENKER
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As the title of my chapter suggests, I will contrast the spirit of Hegel's *Phenomenology of Spirit* with the phenomenological interpretations that Heidegger and Fink offer of this masterpiece. As early as the final chapter of his qualifying dissertation on the problem of categories, Heidegger called for "a principal confrontation with the system of historical worldview that is the most powerful in fullness as in depth, wealth of lived experience, and concept-formation, . . . that is, with Hegel."<sup>1</sup> This confrontation would not take place until several years later. On 25 June 1929, Heidegger wrote to his good friend Karl Jaspers: "At present I am lecturing for the first time on Fichte, Hegel, Schelling—and a new world opens itself for me once again; the old experience that the others can not do your reading for you."<sup>2</sup> This summer semester 1929 lecture course focused on Fichte's *Wissenschaftslehre* of 1794. In the final section of the course, Heidegger interpreted Hegel's *Differenzschrift* and discussed the systematic place of the *Phenomenology of Spirit*.<sup>3</sup> In connection with this lecture course, Heidegger also conducted a seminar

on the preface of the *Phenomenology*. Heidegger's most comprehensive confrontation with Hegel was his winter semester 1930–1931 lecture course on the *Phenomenology of Spirit*.<sup>4</sup> In my chapter, I will contrast Heidegger's reading of the *Phenomenology* not only with the letter and spirit of Hegel's work but also with the interpretation of Eugen Fink.<sup>5</sup> Fink was Husserl's last and perhaps most faithful assistant and a student of Heidegger. He also attended Heidegger's lecture course on Hegel. In my reading of Heidegger's and Fink's interpretations, I hope to open up a clearing within which Hegel's *Phenomenology* can present itself as it is. In the first two sections of my chapter, I will discuss Heidegger's and Fink's approach to Hegel's *Phenomenology*. The third and fourth sections will focus on the different readings Heidegger and Fink offer of the first chapter of the *Phenomenology*, Sense-Certainty.

## **I. HOW TO APPROACH HEGEL'S PHENOMENOLOGY OF SPIRIT: HEIDEGGER**

When dealing with Heidegger's interpretations of other philosophers, one should always keep in mind that his reading is never innocent. It is very important to know where his interpretation comes from and in what direction it moves. From 1919 on, Heidegger engaged in what he first called a 'phenomenological critique', then a 'destruction,' and finally an 'overcoming' of philosophy. I will not go into the subtle details of the differences among these approaches. Here it may suffice to note that his interpretation of Hegel is a destruction. Heidegger's reading takes the *Phenomenology of Spirit* as a work of thinking. This means he does not consider it as a work by Hegel or some kind of by-product of his life. In the *Phenomenology* as a work of thinking, thinking itself works as the appropriation of being. The working of thinking gives to the *Phenomenology* its inner necessity and makes it possible for us to initiate this movement each time anew in our own reading of the *Phenomenology* as a text.

A destruction of a philosophical work is not a critique of the past;

it is in a fundamental sense a critique of our own time. In a destruction, we should come to a confrontation with authentic possibilities of human existence as they come to light in past philosophies. Hegel is so important for Heidegger because his philosophy is the completion of metaphysics as an outstanding possibility of human existence. Metaphysics is determined by its fundamental and its guiding question. The fundamental question is the question of being. It is this question that Heidegger takes up again in *Being and Time*. Since we could not answer the question, what is being? immediately, philosophy was guided in its attempt to find an answer by another question: the famous question of Aristotle's *Metaphysics*: what is being as being or what is beingness (*ousia*)? The guiding question determined the history of philosophy as metaphysics and overshadowed the fundamental question, which remained forgotten until Heidegger's *Being and Time*. Philosophy was no longer a saying of being; it became onto-theo-logy. In the history of philosophy, the question of being has been answered through its guiding question. Philosophers have described beingness in different forms: *logos*, *ratio*, reason, knowing.

In Heidegger's view, philosophy begins with the famous saying of Parmenides that being and thinking are the same. Hegel's system is the final and most complete elaboration of this saying. Hegel understands being as such, that is, the real in its true and complete reality, as concept.<sup>6</sup> According to Heidegger, we can say that for Hegel the concept is no longer a means or guiding principle to discover the meaning of being itself; it has become the essence of being as such. The real is the conceptual and the conceptual is the real. Heidegger wants to overcome Hegel's position and move beyond the onto-theological tradition of philosophy and return to its forgotten fundamental question. We can attempt to answer this fundamental question and experience the ontological difference only if we move beyond Hegel's 'logical' conception of philosophy. Heidegger's interpretation of Hegel is a key element in his attempt to turn away from onto-theological thinking and look for nonmetaphysical paths of thinking.

In the age of German idealism, the task of philosophy was determined through its guiding question. Since metaphysics is onto-theology, the problem of the infinite became the central topic of

philosophical research. The need of philosophy expressed itself in the problem of the infinite or absolute. In Heidegger's age, a confrontation with the problem of the infinite is unavoidable. This need of philosophy springs from its guiding question; Heidegger himself is summoned by its fundamental question as it is expressed in the problem of the finite.<sup>7</sup> According to Heidegger, the problem of the infinite presupposes the problem of the finite. The infinite and the finite are presuppositions or conditions of possibility of philosophy. They determine its task. The relation between the finite (or being-there) and the infinite (or being) should be elucidated. Heidegger's interpretation is a part of this elucidation.

In his lecture course on Hegel's *Phenomenology*, Heidegger remains true to the battle-call of his former teacher Edmund Husserl: *to the matters themselves!* His interpretation starts there, where the matter itself of Hegel's work begins, that is, the chapter on sense-certainty. To philosophize is a bit like swimming. If you want to swim, you need to get wet. However, if you go swimming with a group of students, you'd better make sure they know how to swim before everybody jumps into the water. Before jumping into Hegel's *Phenomenology*, Heidegger teaches his students how to swim in a brief introduction. The goal of these preliminary remarks is to come to a first and necessary understanding of the purpose and systematic place of Hegel's *Phenomenology*.<sup>8</sup> It is significant that Heidegger does not approach the *Phenomenology* through its preface and introduction but through an elaborate discussion of its title. Heidegger's earlier lecture course on German idealism of summer semester 1929 offers a first clue as to why he skips the preface and introduction. During this course, Heidegger discovered a new world, that is, the world of system-philosophy.<sup>9</sup> In German idealism, the (onto)logical tradition of classical philosophy (Aristotle) and the quest for certainty of modern philosophy (Descartes) are united. Hegel's system of philosophy as strict science is the completion of the history of metaphysics. Only in absolute knowing can the identity of being and thinking (Parmenides) become true and certain. Heidegger's reading of Hegel is based on the presupposition that the *Phenomenology* is written from the standpoint of absolute knowing. He has two different reasons for this presupposition.

The first reason is external and concerns the place of Hegel's system in Heidegger's own interpretation of the history of philosophy. As a system of *science*, and not sciences, Hegel's system is the completion of metaphysics. Hegel uses the word *science* in a Fichtean sense. Philosophy as science deals with the way in which philosophy unfolds itself as absolute knowing.<sup>10</sup> This implies that Hegel's philosophy is developed in the element of absolute knowing.

The second reason is internal and is developed by Hegel in an elucidation of the complete title of the *Phenomenology*. As we shall see, Heidegger claims that the dialectical movement in the *Phenomenology* is made possible only by absolute knowing. Since sense-certainty is an inadequate form of absolute knowing, consciousness is forced to move beyond it toward perception and so on. If sense-certainty were not a form of absolute knowing, there would be no reason for consciousness to move beyond sense-certainty.

Hegel goes to great length in both the preface and the introduction of the *Phenomenology* to prove that philosophy cannot start from the standpoint of absolute knowing. For this reason, Heidegger has to skip both. Hegel says explicitly that the *Phenomenology* is the ladder to reach the standpoint of absolute knowing.<sup>11</sup> Furthermore, Hegel's main criticism of Schelling was that we could not start with absolute knowing. This would be the night in which all cows are black and knowledge is shot from a pistol.<sup>12</sup> Does this mean that Heidegger's reading of Hegel is wrong, or did he see more clearly than Hegel himself? For the time being, these must remain open questions. Heidegger himself knew very well that his interpretations are often violent. He was well enough schooled in hermeneutics to know that there is no immediate access to the content of philosophical works. We must always force a text to speak to us. Every philosophical text is the expression of an understanding of something. Heidegger and Hegel agree that there is no immediate intuition of this 'something'. We can get at it only through a mediation of the understanding as it is expressed in the text. This understanding is determined by its hermeneutical situation. Every interpretation is a destruction of a hermeneutical situation and thus a confrontation with the authenticity of our own existence. Here Heidegger's

destruction takes the form of an elucidation of the complete title of Hegel's *Phenomenology of Spirit*.

When Heidegger gave his lecture course, there was still much confusion about the exact title of Hegel's famous work. Heidegger did not know that the double title, *Science of the Experience of Consciousness* and *Science of the Phenomenology of Spirit*, was due to binding errors. The original title of the work is the *Science of the Experience of Consciousness*. This title is explained by Hegel in his introduction, the first part of the work he wrote. While the book was being printed, Hegel replaced this title with *Science of the Phenomenology of Spirit*.<sup>13</sup> According to Heidegger, the full title of Hegel's work reads as follows: *System of Science. First Part. Science of the Experience of Consciousness. Science of the Phenomenology of Spirit*. Heidegger begins his elucidation with a question: Why does the system of science demand as its first part a science of the experience of consciousness? He draws our attention to the fact that Hegel speaks of *science* and not *sciences*. Hegel's system cannot be a joining together of different sciences in order to give each science its proper place within a whole and provide it with its foundation. For Hegel, like Fichte and Schelling, science is philosophy: "They are concerned with *overcoming finite knowledge and attaining infinite knowledge*."<sup>14</sup> The system of science is the system of absolute knowing. And so we come to the next question: what is absolute knowing?

Absolute knowing is opposed to relative knowing. All relative knowing is relative in relation to its object. Absolute knowing, on the other hand, does not remain tied to an object. It absolves itself from the object it knows and remains in this absolving mediation a form of knowing. In this mediation, the known object changes in the way it is known. Absolute knowing frees itself from relative knowing and knows itself as knowing in this mediating process. Consciousness as the most immediate form of knowing is in its intentionality always with its object. When we are conscious, we are always conscious of something. When consciousness begins to know itself as consciousness, it absolves itself from its objects and becomes self-consciousness as a mediated form of knowing. Because self-consciousness has as its object itself as consciousness, it remains a relative form of knowing.<sup>15</sup>



Absolute knowing absolves itself from self-consciousness and becomes reason.<sup>16</sup> Reason knows itself as the unity of self-consciousness and consciousness.<sup>17</sup> It is aware of itself as the purely unbounded, purely absolved knowledge or absolute knowing. Science is as absolute knowing. The title *System of Science* means science as system.

In the next step of his interpretation, Heidegger explains why the first part of the system must be the science of the experience of consciousness and the science of the phenomenology of spirit. The first part of the system is science or absolute knowing as system in its first exposition. The two titles indicate the same thing in different ways.<sup>18</sup> How must we understand the first title: *Science of the Experience of Consciousness*?

Science means absolute knowing. Experience means for Hegel "testing the matter itself in and for the context to which it belongs."<sup>19</sup> Experience teaches us that things may in truth be different from what they seemed to be. This seeming to be belongs to experience itself. We cannot get rid of it. Experience of consciousness is the experience of consciousness itself in which it discovers that it is in truth not what it seemed to be. Consciousness is the most immediate form of knowing and therefore also the most relative form. It knows only its objects and not itself. When consciousness experiences that every object can only be an object for consciousness, it discovers that every object is itself at the same time a being for consciousness.<sup>20</sup> In this experience, consciousness learns what knowing is and changes in the sense that it comes to itself. The process of experience is necessary because knowing is in its essence absolute knowing. Absolute knowing knows as reason the identity of self-consciousness and consciousness. This identity is what Hegel calls 'spirit'. The experience of consciousness is at the same time the mediating process in which spirit appears. The science of the appearance of spirit is the phenomenology of spirit.

What is a phenomenology of spirit? Phenomenology is "the manner in which spirit itself exists."<sup>21</sup> The appearance of spirit is the mediating process in which absolute knowing comes to itself and is as such the self-verification of finite knowing as spirit.

The first title explains what it is that verifies and represents itself in its truth: consciousness. The second title indicates that conscious-

ness verifies itself as spirit.<sup>22</sup> In the first part of the system, consciousness experiences that it is in truth spirit and learns that it is in truth absolute knowing. At the end of the *Phenomenology*, absolute knowing is in its own element.<sup>23</sup> Since consciousness is as relative knowing, the most immediate form of absolute knowing, the *Phenomenology* begins absolutely with the absolute.<sup>24</sup> In other words, Hegel presupposes in the *Phenomenology* what he wants to achieve in the end through a complex process of mediation, that is, absolute knowing.<sup>25</sup> This is neither a weakness nor an oversight on the part of Hegel. Philosophy can say or make explicit only what it presupposes as the *word* or *logos* of its time.<sup>26</sup> A philosopher can make explicit only the authentic possibilities of the thrownness of existence in her own time. For the German idealists, absolute knowing was an authentic possibility of human existence.

The way in which Heidegger plays the two titles of the *Phenomenology* off against each other is brilliant. He anticipates in many ways Pöggeler's famous interpretation of the idea of a phenomenology of spirit.<sup>27</sup> The science of the experience of consciousness is through its inner mediation transformed into a phenomenology of spirit. As Pöggeler has shown, absolute knowing comes into its own element when self-consciousness becomes reason as the first appearance of spirit and not, as Heidegger claims, at the end of the *Phenomenology* in Absolute Knowing.<sup>28</sup> This in itself does not falsify but only corrects Heidegger's interpretation.

It is very revealing that Heidegger in his scrupulous interpretation of the title of the *Phenomenology* pays no attention at all to this question: what does knowing mean for Hegel? He explains the difference between relative and absolute knowing and presupposes that we already know what knowing is. For Hegel, knowing in its immediate and most relative form means to be with the other. Self-consciousness knows that the other is in its being a being for consciousness. Reason knows that in its being with the others as other, it still is by itself. This is the principle of spirit and it is this principle that makes the mediating process of the *Phenomenology* possible. In the *Phenomenology*, Hegel makes explicit that this principle is the enabling ground of each subject-object relation. This explication is

the dialectical movement. For Heidegger, who like Kant is an analytical thinker, the dialectical movement in Hegel's thought is the stumbling block. His own thinking is static and lacks the inner movement of Hegel's philosophy. For Heidegger, concepts and categories are formal indications that point to structures and functions, never to things or substances. The phenomena that Heidegger describes belong to the constitution of our being-there. This is the reason why we cannot objectify them. We cannot give an objective description of being-toward-death; we can only experience in our own life what it means to be mortal. The static character of Heidegger's thought expresses itself in the equiprimordiality of the existentials. Being-in-the-world and being-with cannot be deduced from each other. Because Heidegger's thought lacks the inner movement of Hegel's dialectics, he cannot describe the interplay of his existentials. In a profound sense Hegel follows the movement of the being of being-there, since spirit in its most immediate form is being with the other in the world.

## **2. HOW TO APPROACH HEGEL'S PHENOMENOLOGY OF SPIRIT: FINK**

Fink's lecture course is both an essay on Hegel and an attempt to take Husserl's demand to get to the matters themselves and philosophize from them seriously in the interpretation of a philosophical text. In his phenomenological interpretation, Fink tries to go with Hegel's path of thinking.<sup>29</sup> Method and matter cannot be separated from each other. Phenomenology gets to the matter itself, that is, itself as philosophy, in the interpretation of philosophical texts. For Fink, phenomenology is a re-actualization of the thinking of a philosopher as it has been expressed in a text. In such a rethinking of Hegel's thought, it should become alive again for us. In this sense, every phenomenological interpretation is a destruction of our own time. To follow great thinkers is a dangerous undertaking because they enable us to put our own thinking and existence to the test. Fink is well aware of the danger of reading one's own prejudices into a text. As

the word *rethinking* already indicates, the moment of *re* and the moment of *thinking* are equally important. Rethinking is determined by both nearness and distance. Fink's interpretation is an attempt to think *with* and not *about* Hegel.

The nearness and distance of a phenomenological interpretation are also important in another respect. For Fink, Hegel's philosophy is the completion of the history of metaphysics. Like Heidegger, Fink tries to overcome metaphysics in his own philosophy. Fink is near to Hegel because his hermeneutical situation is determined by metaphysics. To overcome metaphysics, Fink must keep his distance from Hegel and aim for a matter itself that lies beyond any attempt to rethink the *Phenomenology of Spirit*. This matter itself is Fink's own cosmo-ontology of the world as the appearance of being. Hegel's *Phenomenology* is perhaps the most complete interpretation of the clearing as the ontological structure of knowing. And yet, in his thought, earth as the dark preceding and enabling ground of clearing remains in the dark and forgotten.<sup>30</sup> Fink's own philosophy is an attempt to bring the interplay of earth and clearing as the appropriation of world into the light of post-metaphysical thinking.

Fink follows in Heidegger's footsteps and regards Hegel's philosophy as the completion of metaphysics.<sup>31</sup> For Fink, the fundamental question of philosophy is the question, what is being? Contrary to Heidegger, he does not distinguish between a fundamental and a guiding question of philosophy. He rejects Heidegger's conception of the forgetfulness of being, even though he also wants to overcome metaphysics. In Greek philosophy the being of beings was understood as substance (*ousia*), or that which supports itself (*hupokeimenon*) and stands on its own. In modern philosophy, the being of beings as that which supports itself and stands on its own was understood as subjectivity.<sup>32</sup> Hegel unites both traditions and attempts to understand true being not only as substance, but also as subject.<sup>33</sup> Hegel's *Phenomenology* is the attempt to show that the way of being of substances, or being-in-itself, and the way of being of subject, or being-for-itself, are in truth identical in their difference. In-itself and for-itself are fundamental concepts of Hegel's philosophy. Only because being discloses itself as being-in-itself and being-for-

itself can there be substances and subjects. Every being that is itself can be itself only if it is different from all other beings. Beings can stand in themselves only if they negate the being of all other beings.<sup>34</sup> Precisely in this negating of all other beings is every being as that which stands on its own connected with all other beings. In itself it is at the same time for others. The *logos* or concept differentiates and holds together all beings. Hegel tries to think the being in beings. According to Fink, he is the first philosopher who does not think being as beingness, that is, the fundamental quality that gives each being its being. For Hegel being is a flowing power and as such it can only be disclosed through the movement of a living concept.<sup>35</sup> He avoids the trap of a fixed set of clearly defined categories that tells us what something is. His fundamental concepts are moments of the movement of the concept, that is, the process of thinking itself.

Fink rejects all interpretations of Hegel's *Phenomenology* which claim he presupposed the absolute spirit.<sup>36</sup> In other words, the *Phenomenology* does not start absolutely with the absolute. The absolute spirit is the result of Hegel's attempt to think through the universal ontological concepts like being-in-itself and being-for-itself, truth and being, being and appearance, and being and becoming. In all these concepts the same or the self is thought. Being is the one process of differentiation and this process is the truth of being. The starting-point of the *Phenomenology* is Hegel's stroke of genius: the insight that the truth of being is knowing. Hegel tries to think what knowing as knowing *is*.<sup>37</sup> Hegel develops his ontology from the problem of knowing. How must we understand being if there is something like knowing? Fink rightly emphasizes that the *Phenomenology* does not begin with absolute knowing, or with the absolute. Hegel starts with an analysis of knowing in its most immediate form, that is, sense-certainty. Hegel's thought culminates in the concept of absolute spirit, which is the identity of being and knowing. As Parmenides said, being and thinking are the same. The oneness of being and thinking is the central problem of philosophy that finds its most complete solution in Hegel's system.<sup>38</sup>

Hegel's ontological and fundamental question about the being of knowing is more than a *Critique of Pure Reason*, also more than a

reflection on the relation between knowing and human being-there. Knowing is ontologically made possible by the self-presentation of beings in the world. In a speculative sense, knowing is both the way in which every being is for another and the way in which this being for which it is, is at the same time for itself.<sup>39</sup> In every form of knowing we find the ontological structure of being for another and being for itself. When a being appears before another being, it loses its standing in itself and yet its knowing itself is at the same time the positing of itself by the other being. Knowing presupposes the presentation of the being that is known, but this presentation is possible only if it is represented by another being. The *parousia* of beings (object) and the human representation of beings (subject) are joined in human existence as the place where knowing happens. In the phenomenon of knowing, the universal movement of being shows itself. Hegel does not understand knowing from an epistemological perspective like Kant or Fichte; knowing is an ontological process. The *nous* or reason lives in being. In knowing, the power of *logos* or concept shows itself. This logical appropriating event is at the same time the unconcealment or *alêtheia* of being.<sup>40</sup> Being in itself is at the same time being for another. This being for another is being known, and being known is the being-for-itself of the being that knows. The real is conceptual and the conceptual is real.

Hegel unites the Greek and modern conceptions of knowledge with each other and shows the limits and possibilities of both conceptions. He thinks both the logical in being and the ontological in thinking. His philosophy is onto-logic.<sup>41</sup> Knowing is the appropriating event of the awakening of the clearing in the being of beings within which the interplay of presentation and representation can take place. Hegel approaches the phenomenon of knowing from its two sides as presentation and representation. A being presents itself in its exterior and shape. Yet we know from experience that beings can be different than they appear to be. A being can present itself as seeming (*Schein*) and thus hide its essence. Are beings in truth what they seem to be? Hegel uses the concepts of essence and appearance to disclose the inner movement of presentation and representation. The essence of a being is what it is in itself; the appearance is what it

is for another. Knowing is the long and difficult process in which knowing discovers its own truth and certainty. For Hegel, being and time are the same. Time is "the existent concept itself."<sup>42</sup> Being is temporal since in it thinking and clearing happen. In his ontological knowing, the being of beings is understood as thinking, becoming, and seeming (*Scheinen*). Being expresses itself in the power of thinking, the movement of becoming, and the revealing and concealing of appearance. This threefold unity is the true. The true is the provisional name of the absolute.<sup>43</sup>

According to Fink, Hegel's absolute is neither a being nor a substance. The absolute appropriates itself as thinking, becoming, and appearing. Hegel can name this process "the true," since being is what truly is. The true is for Hegel the all-life of being in all finite things.<sup>44</sup> The absolute as it is thought at the end of the *Phenomenology* is the true or the happening of clearing. It is time which lets all beings be and so the eternal movement which pushes all beings-in-itself toward being-for-itself. It is the bacchanalian intoxication.

Contrary to Heidegger, Fink focuses his attention on the movement of Hegel's thought. He makes clear that the *Phenomenology* as a phenomenology of knowing does not begin absolutely with the absolute; it begins with knowing as it is given immediately in its most immediate form. Philosophy should not begin with a presupposed reality or substance. In philosophy our aim should be to think substance also as subject. This process of mediation should make use only of determinations and distinctions that we find in what is given 'here' and 'now'. In this way we can follow the movement of the concept itself. For Fink, the matter itself of Hegel's *Phenomenology* begins in the introduction. He wants to show how the principle of spirit, being in the other as other by itself, is at work throughout the whole *Phenomenology*. In this way, he remains closer to Hegel's intentions than Heidegger.

Hegel's introduction to the *Phenomenology of Spirit* is an introduction to philosophy itself and belongs to philosophy. Hegel teaches us what it means to philosophize. Only when we are prepared to go with Hegel's thinking can we learn to philosophize. In the introduction, philosophizing happens.<sup>45</sup> The movement of thinking in the introduction happens in four steps:

1. Hegel rejects the popular conception that an epistemological critique of cognition should precede philosophy. When we want to analyze the powers of cognition as a kind of instrument, we make a separation between knowing and being which prevents us from ever putting them back together again. The absolute as the being in all beings will then remain outside the grasp of cognition as an unknowable thing in itself.<sup>46</sup>
2. The next step of Hegel's movement begins with the claim that "the absolute alone is true, or the truth alone is absolute."<sup>47</sup> This statement can be no more than an anticipation. The *Phenomenology* is the proof of its truth.<sup>48</sup> The absolute is not a thing; it is in its essence a disclosing process. The absolute as being reveals itself in the being of all beings. The being in all beings is the light in which we see all things and which we normally do not notice. The understanding of being is the authentic essence of truth. Only when we understand being can beings present themselves to us. For Hegel, being is a lightning process and knowing is being.<sup>49</sup> The ontological level of knowing is determined through the measure in which its object truly is. Knowledge of appearances is appearing knowledge. Knowledge of the absolute as true and real being is absolute knowing. Hegel can prove his position only if he is capable of explaining to natural consciousness itself that its understanding of being and knowing is untenable.<sup>50</sup> This means Hegel has to make visible in natural consciousness itself an absolute moment and thus prove to it that its understanding of being and knowing cannot be the final truth. In this process, natural consciousness is forced to move beyond itself and become self-consciousness.
3. This movement is the third step, that is, the exposition of appearing knowledge.<sup>51</sup> Exposition is the elucidation of natural consciousness itself in which it will show itself to be only the concept of knowledge and not real knowledge. Natural consciousness has the innate possibility to become real knowledge or knowledge of the real, that is, absolute knowing. The exposition of appearing knowledge is at the same time the phenomenology of spirit.<sup>52</sup> This is the way in which philos-



ophy develops itself from everyday knowing. The history of the education of consciousness itself to the standpoint of science begins with knowing as we find it immediately in its most immediate form: sense-certainty.

4. The fourth step is the investigation and examination of the reality of cognition.<sup>53</sup> This is not an epistemological theory but the method with which Hegel will develop the exposition of appearing knowledge. The reality of cognition is not its existence but its essentiality. Hegel's investigation and examination of appearing knowledge try to determine to what extent this knowledge understands being in beings.<sup>54</sup> For Hegel, consciousness is the thinking and projecting of being. We stand as it were in consciousness. The examination of consciousness is a comparing of consciousness with itself.<sup>55</sup> Consciousness projects the measure of what is in itself. In its most immediate form, it perceives beings as things-in-themselves. The being of beings is independent of its knowing them. In consciousness lies a double moment: beings are only insofar as they are for consciousness and at the same time they are beyond this relation.<sup>56</sup> These moments contradict each other and this contradiction leads to a reversal, that is, a new appearance of consciousness and a corresponding projection of the being in beings. Thus the phenomenology of spirit is the science of the experiences of consciousness.<sup>57</sup>

### 3. HEIDEGGER: SENSE-CERTAINTY IN THE LIGHT OF ABSOLVING KNOWING

In his interpretation of the first chapter on sense-certainty, Heidegger wants to discover the inner law of the *Phenomenology of Spirit*. This law expresses itself in distinct and different ways throughout the whole work.<sup>58</sup> Heidegger brings this law to light in his interpretative reading of a carefully selected paragraph. We should keep in mind that Heidegger never gives an interpretation of a philosophy as a

complete whole. He always interprets a few sections, a few lines, or even just a few words that in his view express the essence of a philosophy. It remains ironic that a philosopher who is convinced that the essence of a philosophy is expressed in a few pages at the most thought it necessary to publish a collected edition of his own works that contains over a hundred volumes.

Hegel's paragraph reads: "The knowledge which is at first or is immediately our object cannot be anything else but immediate knowledge itself, a *knowledge* of the *immediate* or of a *being*. Our approach to the object must also be *immediate* or *receptive*; we must alter nothing in the object as it presents itself. In apprehending it, we must refrain from trying to comprehend it."<sup>59</sup>

Heidegger discovers in this paragraph the inner law of the *Phenomenology of Spirit*, that is, the coming to itself of absolute knowing. He begins his interpretative reading with two questions: (1) Why can the knowledge which is at the start immediately our object not be anything else but immediate knowing?<sup>60</sup> and (2) Who are the 'We' for whom immediate knowledge is the object? Heidegger's answers to these questions do not come as a surprise. Absolute knowing must come to itself through the mediating process of a phenomenology of spirit. This is only possible if it starts by refraining from mediation and becomes what it is not: relative knowing. Immediate knowledge is a form of a knowing which has not yet been mediated. The 'We' for whom immediate knowledge is the object are those who already know absolutely, whose knowing is already science. The immediate to which 'We' the mediators of the *Phenomenology of Spirit* refer always already stands under the dominion of mediation. The latter in turn can be what it is only when it refers to what is *un*-mediated, precisely in order to *mediate* it: "The *im*-mediate is already the *im-mediated* of mediation."<sup>61</sup> Immediate knowledge is a knowledge of the immediate, or that which simply is. Its object is being in its most immediate form. Sense-certainty as the most immediate form of consciousness knows its object as independent of itself or as a thing in itself.

According to Heidegger we must distinguish between three objects, if we want to understand what is really going on in the *Phenomenology of Spirit*:

1. The object *in itself*, as it is immediate for consciousness;
2. The being-for-it (consciousness) of the in-itself;
3. The being-for-us (who know absolutely) of what is a being-for-itself as such.

The inner law of the *Phenomenology of Spirit* determines the interplay of these three objects. What the object is for us, who know absolutely, is what it is in truth: absolute knowing in an inadequate form. Knowing thus begins to absolve itself from its immediateness. The absolute is in itself a knowing process of negating and positing and, as such, the mediating of the infinite and the finite. Absolute knowing is both immediately relative and the process of mediation in which it can absolve itself from all relativity. The essence of the absolute is the in-finite absolving.<sup>62</sup> The absolving knowing of science can have only as its first object the most immediate form of knowing.

After these preliminary remarks, Heidegger analyzes Hegel's understanding of sense-certainty. Sense-certainty is a form of cognition and has as such its truth.<sup>63</sup> What strikes Heidegger most is that Hegel never mentions our senses or sense-organs. He develops his interpretation of sensibility out of spirit and within spirit.<sup>64</sup> Sense-certainty appears as the richest and truest kind of knowledge. But, as Heidegger remarks, we already know that it really is the poorest and most superficial kind of knowledge. Since sense-certainty has as its object the 'this here' or the 'this now', its content is limitless.<sup>65</sup> It always has before itself something as 'this here' or 'this now'. Sense-certainty knows only that its object is; it cannot tell us *what* it is. The truth of sense-certainty is in each instance this being which sense-certainty means; and sense-certainty means it, this, as what is extant; it means it, *this, that which is*. The *is* is the statement and the truth of sense-certainty, which finds its object as existing independent of itself. The I who knows in sense-certainty can only know that 'this here' is. The truth of sense-certainty is not concerned with the knower or consciousness. It looks away from itself and is only with its object. Sense-certainty appears as the most immediate form of knowing. According to Heidegger, sense-certainty can only appear in this way before a regard that looks away from all mediating seeing. It proves

itself to be the most abstract and poorest *truth*.<sup>66</sup> How is this possible? Heidegger introduces this question in order to prove that the *Phenomenology of Spirit* begins with absolute knowing. Sense-certainty itself could never know that its truth is the poorest and most abstract. It only knows that its object is. If it appears as the poorest and most abstract truth, it can only appear in this way before the absolving knowing of us, who know better than sense-certainty.<sup>67</sup>

Heidegger rightly emphasizes that in sense-certainty itself, if we take it immediately in the form in which it presents itself immediately, there is nothing that could force it to move beyond itself.<sup>68</sup> Sense-certainty is only with the *is* of its object and knows nothing else. Because Heidegger's destruction of Hegel takes place at the crossing, which is located between finitude and infinity, he wants to prove that Hegel starts with absolute knowing, for he can then show in two steps that (1) in the *Phenomenology of Spirit*, the understanding of being is absolving and the absolving knowing is absolute; and that (2) Hegel's absolute is transcendence or finitude in disguise. The appropriation of being as unconcealment makes the science of logic possible and thus Heidegger needs to move beyond Hegel's logical conception of philosophy. But is it really necessary that we take sense-certainty as inadequate form of absolute knowing? Is it not the case that in the science of the experience of consciousness, consciousness comes to self-understanding? Hegel makes clear that the principle of spirit, that is, being by itself in the other as other, is expressed in each and every subject-object relation. In consciousness itself as a subject-object relation, the principle of spirit appears slowly. In the 'this here' of sense-certainty, when we take it with Hegel in a reflective and formal way, the principle of spirit already appears. The inner law of the phenomenology of spirit is this principle, and it is this principle that forces consciousness to move beyond its most immediate form. The development of the principle of spirit ends when the subject and object of the subject-object relation have, as such, become identical, that is, in absolute knowing. Absolute knowing really is the result and not the presupposition of the *Phenomenology of Spirit*.

When we only look on with Heidegger, we see at once that we cannot stop at pure being, the extant character of the sensible object

and its knowledge. Actual sense-certainty is never the sheer immediacy that we take it to be, but rather each actual sense certainty is an example.<sup>69</sup> According to Heidegger, in sense-certainty we always have a 'this' before us. However, when we ask sense-certainty what the 'this' is, it will refer to something: this chair or this table is the 'this'. Sense-certainty cannot explain what the 'this' as this is; it only gives an example of a different 'this' each time. When sense-certainty means a 'this', it exemplifies its character as being 'a this' in and through the 'this' in each instance. Pure being, the true immediacy, is a sense-certainty which in each case exemplifies. The I, who means the 'this' through sense-certainty, is also in each case exemplified just as the 'this'. The 'this' as object and the 'this' as I step out from pure being and both constitute a difference.

When we not only look closely at sense-certainty but also reflect with Heidegger on what has happened, we realize that the 'this' as object and the 'this' as I could step out from sense-certainty only because they are already the essence of sense-certainty. Or, in other words, the immediacy of sense-certainty is mediated. In the essence of what is immediate reside the 'this' as object and the 'this' as I, along with their mediation.<sup>70</sup> Heidegger can now claim that sense-certainty appears to be in truth a form of absolute knowing. We can find the distinction between immediacy and mediation only if we have already made it. This is the basic character of our comportment in absolvent knowing; and this constitutes for Heidegger the enabling ground of Hegel's dialectics.

Heidegger next shows what experience consciousness must undergo with sense-certainty.<sup>71</sup> This experience is the real beginning of the phenomenology of spirit. Sense-certainty offers itself as a knowledge of something known as that which is. Its object is that which remains extant even if it is not known. Knowing and the I who knows are of no importance to the object as it is in itself. Only the object is, that which is true and the essence. This being in itself is the truth of sense-certainty. We cannot help but wonder if the object of sense-certainty is in truth such. Here Heidegger once again tries to show that it is the 'We' who look closely at sense-certainty, that push it beyond its own limits. The object of sense-certainty is the 'this'.<sup>72</sup>

So we or the absolver knowing ask sense-certainty itself what the 'this' means to it? The thisness of its object means to sense-certainty either the 'here' or the 'now'. The 'now' remains constant and is 'now': each time in each given instance. Now is morning; now is afternoon; now is night. The 'now' remains indifferent to what is 'now', be it day or night. The 'here' likewise remains indifferent to the character of a 'here' whether it is a tree, a chair, or a person. The 'here' and the 'now' are in truth universals. This is the reason why they remain empty and indifferent. The 'here' and the 'now' are mediated moments of simplicity.

Heidegger asks again what is the true and the being for sense-certainty.<sup>73</sup> The 'this' is a universal. Sense-certainty means that which has the character of the 'this', either as a 'here' like a tree or a 'now' like five o'clock. What it actually says is a universal. Language says the opposite of what sense-certainty means. It means the single item, but language makes it say the universal. Language has "the divine nature of immediately perverting the meaning of what is said."<sup>74</sup> It detaches us from one-sidedness and allows us to state what is universal and true.

As we have seen, the object of sense-certainty is the being, which exists in itself and is the true. The object is essential; the knowledge of the object is inessential. In a closer examination, we discovered that what the 'this' as object is, is not at all what lasts, but is what constantly changes. Compared with the 'here' and the 'now', the object is inessential. The object shows itself to be not the true as the being in itself, but rather is in each case only the meant object insofar as the object is taken into meaning by the I who knows. The object exists because this I knows it. Thus, everything is reversed.

Sense-certainty is expelled from its object and driven back into the I because it contradicts itself in saying something about itself and thus speaks against what it means.<sup>75</sup> Heidegger emphasizes that in this first experience, sense-certainty takes the direction of the "I know." It already is a short-lived return of consciousness to itself. In the immediacy of sense-certainty we discover the absolute restlessness, which startles the 'this' and the 'meaning' and will now no longer leave them at rest.

Experience as absolving self-releasement shows us who are actual

*in spirit* what sense-certainty truly is. Is the truth of sense-certainty the meaning instead of the 'this'? According to Hegel, the force of the truth of sense-certainty "lies in the I, in the immediacy of my seeing, hearing and so on."<sup>76</sup> For Hegel, 'meaning' means to take up into the meaning or receiving. Each I means and takes immediately into its own only what it receives through the senses. The immediacy of sense-certainty does not lie in the object of its meaning but in its being immediately devoted to its object. In the activity of meaning (*im Meinen*), I reflect only on what is mine.<sup>77</sup> However, when we compare the meaning of one I with the meaning of others, we discover that the meaning of the one denies the rights of the others and vice versa. They wipe out each other's truth. But there still remains something, which is simple. When I say I, I mean only myself, but at the same time I say something that everyone else can say, because everyone else is also an I. The I and the meaning are universal and are therefore nothing immediate.

When we turn wholly and solely to this universal I, we can undertake a final approach in order to grasp immediately what is immediate.<sup>78</sup> What is immediately given is now. What is this 'now' in itself? In saying now, it has already passed. It no longer belongs to the 'now' to exist even if it exists. The 'now' does not have the truth of being. What essentially has been is in fact not a thing that is. Heidegger asks what has happened here.<sup>79</sup> The experience that we undergo with the 'now' is an exhibiting and as such a mediation. When we grasp the 'now', we grasp the no-longer 'now' and arrive at the truth that the 'now' has been. This is the first sublation. When we say that the 'now' is something reflected in itself, we sublate its truth again. The 'now' is what is absolutely many 'nows'; it is universal.

Sense-certainty as a whole is the movement of mediation we have described above. In this history, what is true in sense-certainty is grasped. Sense-certainty turns into perception as the knowing of the universal. The essence of the immediacy of immediate knowledge is mediation.<sup>80</sup> Hegel tries to keep from falling out of the immediacy of sense-certainty, but for Heidegger this attempt is doomed to fail, for as soon as we inquire into immediate knowledge and its essence, we are already beyond immediacy.<sup>81</sup> In other words, Hegel has con-

strued sense-certainty from within the horizon of absolvence. Sense-certainty as such can become visible only by virtue of this construction. This construction is at the same time a reconstruction from the standpoint of absolute knowing. The immediacy of sense-certainty is a reconstruction of absolute knowing in its most immediate form. If we want to comprehend immediate knowledge, we must (re)construct it in the light of absolute knowledge. Hegel's dialectics is the interplay of construction and reconstruction.

#### **4. FINK: THE MYSTERY OF BREAD AND WINE**

Fink's interpretation of the chapter on sense-certainty is based on his conviction that the correspondence of concept and object is the fundamental problem of Hegel's *Phenomenology*.<sup>82</sup> This problem reminds us of the famous *adequatio rei atque intellectus* definition of truth. As a student of Heidegger, Fink immediately points out that the dimension within which concept and object can correspond is presupposed as self-evident. We assume that our knowing and the things-in-themselves correspond, but how this correspondence itself is possible is a question we usually do not ask. Fink distinguishes between ontic and ontological truth. The ontological truth is the relation of being and being true which makes the correspondence of concept and object in knowing possible.<sup>83</sup> Hegel's problem of the correspondence of concept and object concerns ontological truth. This dimension should itself be examined. In this examination, the essence of truth will undergo a change.

Why does the *Phenomenology of Spirit* start with an examination of sense-certainty as the first form of consciousness? As Fink remarks, consciousness is here opposed to self-consciousness. In this chapter, Hegel criticizes the traditional ontology in a process of thinking through (*dia-legesthai*) its inner contradiction. Like Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason*, Hegel's *Phenomenology* is both a critique of metaphysics and the foundation of a new metaphysics. Sense-certainty as the most immediate perceiving of being is examined, not in an epis-



temological analysis, but in a thinking through of the idea of being which permeates all sensible perceiving. Ontological thought is examined in a preview of its implicit concept of being. Fink explicitly denies that this examination presupposes the standpoint of absolute knowing.<sup>84</sup> The *Phenomenology* is the attempt to prove that absolute knowing is a real possibility of finite beings. Hegel's examination of all forms of ontological knowledge does not take place from the standpoint of absolute knowing, but has absolute knowing in view. Absolute knowing is the knowing of being as an understanding of being that has gone through the labor of the concept. The examination of sense-certainty is a dialogue of the soul with itself in which its implicit understanding of being is made explicit.

According to Fink, Hegel is concerned with being as it is grasped in sense-certainty. This is the reason why we find nothing about the senses or the sense organs in his examination of sense-certainty. His line of questioning is ontological. He starts with sense-certainty since it is knowledge of the immediate or being. It knows that its object is and nothing more.<sup>85</sup> Fink rightly emphasizes that the certainty of sense-certainty has nothing to do with Descartes's *certitudo*. Certainty is for Hegel the whole of the knowing relation between the knower and the known. Hegel examines sense-certainty in the way it knows being. Does sense-certainty as the immediate knowing of being correspond with its implicit idea of being? When we reflect on these examinations, we will also learn what dialectics is.<sup>86</sup>

Fink's interpretation takes place in five steps: (1) an exposition of the inner moments of sense-certainty; (2) an examination of the way in which sense-certainty knows being, which leads to a reversal in the self-interpretation of sense-certainty; (3) an examination of this new self-interpretation; (4) this new self-understanding is examined; and (5) in some concluding remarks, the process as a whole is discussed.<sup>87</sup>

1. Sense-certainty seems to be the richest kind of knowledge. Its richness is limitless and extended in time and space. The sensible is everywhere I go. Sense-certainty also seems to be the truest knowledge. It gives its object immediately as a whole. Sense-certainty is concrete and does not abstract from its object. The knowledge of the senses is always true because we can see only what can be seen and

not what can be heard, and so on. However, sense-certainty is also a knowing of being. It remains not content only to be with what can be seen, smelled, heard, touched, and tasted. It claims that what it sees, smells, hears, touches, and tastes *is*.<sup>88</sup> Sense-certainty says that its object is. In this sense, it is also the most abstract and poorest form of knowledge. Its ontic richness corresponds with its ontological poverty. The knowing I, who knows in sense-certainty, knows only "the sheer being of the matter."<sup>89</sup> In the knowing of sheer being, the I is a pure I who knows only that the matter is. Sense-certainty is ontologically primitive. As a connection, it is an immediate pure connection. Consciousness is in sense-certainty I and nothing more, a pure 'this'. The singular consciousness knows a pure 'this' as a particular thing.

At this point, the exposition of sense-certainty begins. It is knowledge of the particular. It knows only being in the form: I as a 'this' know: this is. However, as Hegel shows, this being is the being of a being. When we look on closely, we discover that actual sense-certainty is not merely this pure immediacy but an *example* of it. The particular 'this' of sense-certainty is in each instance another. Every concrete particular 'this' is an example of the 'this' as a universal. When sense-certainty thinks the particular as in each example 'this' and the knowing I as a 'this', two moments fall out of the immediacy of its being: the I and the object.<sup>90</sup> Sense-certainty as the immediate perceiving of the being of beings contains within itself the difference between the I and the known matter. Neither one nor the other is only immediately present in sense-certainty, but each is at the same time mediated. Truth as the correspondence of knowing and being can exist only through something. Or, in other words, the thing that is known and this known thing can be in sense-certainty only through the I who knows it.

2. In his first reflection on sense-certainty Hegel discovered two fundamental differences: the difference between essence and example and the difference between immediacy and mediation. We can now examine sense-certainty with Hegel. Since sense-certainty is essentially concerned with the 'this', Hegel's examination begins with the question, What is the 'this'?<sup>91</sup> This question asks what it means to-be-

this. Being-this is being-here or being-now. The particular real is *hic et nunc*.<sup>92</sup> The 'this' has two shapes: either the 'here' or the 'now'. From this difference, Hegel develops the dialectics of sense-certainty, that is, a destruction of its concept of being as pure immediacy. What is the 'now'? What is the 'here'? What is here and what is now changes all the time. Now is day, now is night. The 'now' is both and neither. Night and day are examples of the 'now'. The particular 'now' which is both this (night) and that (day) and not just this (night) and that (day) remains in the mediation of its moments and is the universal. The 'now' and the 'here' are universals. The universal is the truth of sense-certainty. Language always names the universal and is therefore unable to express the meaning of sense-certainty. But still language is truer than meaning since it asserts the truth of sense-certainty. Language is the first original thinking of being. In sense-certainty itself, language holds sway silently. Sense-certainty is a soundless saying: this is.<sup>93</sup> The self-understanding of sense-certainty is thus turned upside down. It wants to know the particular that is here and now and it appears that its truth is universal.<sup>94</sup> With this result the first examination of sense-certainty comes to an end.

Sense-certainty had the experience that when it thinks the particular as its object, it in truth thinks the universal as the here and now.<sup>95</sup> Despite this experience, sense-certainty does not want to give up its claim that it is immediate knowledge of the particular. If it cannot be immediate knowing of the object, it must be immediate knowing of the I. What was essential becomes inessential and vice versa.<sup>96</sup> The truth of sense-certainty now is in the object as *my* object or in its being meant by *me*. It is because I know it. Meaning thus becomes the mine-ness of beings. Sense-certainty is being driven back into the I.

3. The flight of sense-certainty into the I is the beginning of a new dialectical experience. In his examination of sense-certainty's claim that the I is the force which lets the objects of sensibility be, Hegel shows how the I gets caught up in the same dialectical movement as the 'now' and the 'here'.<sup>97</sup> I see a tree; another I does not see a tree but a house. The meaning of each I is equally true and thus one truth vanishes in the other. The I who remains is not singular but universal. The object is an object only when it is meant by an I. The

I that in each instance means its object is a universal I. In sense-certainty, we have discovered the two moments of the object and the I. Since neither can be understood as the essence of sense-certainty, we can only posit the *whole* of sense-certainty itself as its *essence*.<sup>98</sup> Sense-certainty now limits itself to the particular of the moment and concerns itself neither with the otherness of the 'here' as a tree which passes over into a 'here' that is not a tree but a house, nor with the otherness of the 'now' that changes from night into day, nor with another I for whom something else is its object. Sense-certainty as a whole stands firm within itself as immediacy.

4. The examination of the immediacy of sense-certainty can no longer direct its attention to a 'now' or an 'I'; we can approach it only by letting ourselves point to the 'now' it has asserted. We must as it were "make ourselves into the same singular 'I' that is the one who knows with certainty."<sup>99</sup> We point to the 'now'. What does 'point to' mean? We can point only to things that are here and now. We can point neither to the 'here' nor to the 'now'. Hegel uses the expression 'point to' in contrast to language. Language always takes place within the medium of universality. When we speak about the immediately particular, we always name it as a universal. In this respect, we can show what the particular thing is only by pointing it out to each other. Pointing out is in a fundamental sense objectifying.<sup>100</sup> The immediate is the 'now'. The 'now' is where we are with each other and the things in the world. How can we become aware of the 'now'? We should not speak about it and transform it into a universal. We can only point to the 'now'. When we point to the 'now', it has already ceased to be in the act of pointing to it.<sup>101</sup> So even if we restrict ourselves to the immediacy of sense-certainty and do not move beyond it, our pointing to the 'now' reveals that it is in itself a manifold and a unity. The 'now' is not an atom.<sup>102</sup> It remains as now even if all the 'nows' change all the time. The 'now' has in itself always a 'not-now', that is, the plurality of 'nows' that have been, and yet it remains what it is in this being-other.

The 'now' as the universal that contains the plurality of 'nows' and the 'here' as the universal that contains the plurality of 'heres' are what Hegel calls the 'now' in truth and the 'here' in truth. Because

the true 'here' and 'now' contain within themselves a plurality of 'heres' and 'nows', they are reflected into themselves.<sup>103</sup> Reflection in the Hegelian sense means a sameness which remains what it is in its otherness. The 'now' that we point to has already been in the act of pointing; it is a 'now' that has been and as such it is different from a 'now' that is now. However, the 'now' contains within itself 'nows' that have been and is thus what it is as the same in being-other. According to Fink, Hegel uses the term "reflection" to grasp the movement of return. In reflection, something becomes other and through this otherness returns back to itself.

The final result of the examination of sense-certainty is that what it thinks as being 'means' the particular thing, but this meaning appears to be in its essence the universal.<sup>104</sup> What Hegel has shown is that sense-certainty as the most immediate form of knowing strives beyond itself. In every form of knowing, being is thought and every form of knowing wants to reach being itself.

5. When sense-certainty tries to think being immediately as the particular thing that is given immediately, it has the experience that it means the particular but can only think the universal. Hegel remarks that sense-certainty always forgets this experience. This forgetfulness of being belongs to the essence of our being-there. Forgetfulness of being and the unconcealment of being are equiprimordial.<sup>105</sup> Human beings can believe that sense-certainty is the measure of reality and claim that what the senses show us is being in its fullest and truest sense. These people should, according to Hegel and Fink, "go back to the most elementary school of wisdom. They still have to learn the secret meaning of the eating of bread and the drinking of wine."<sup>106</sup>

Hegel, Heidegger, and Fink share to a large extent the same view of phenomenology. It is first and foremost the scientific method of philosophy and should not be confused with a specific doctrine or a manual. A phenomenology is developed from the matters themselves and attempts to make them present as they are. Although all three philosophers share the conviction that the ultimate task of philosophy is to explicate the relation of being and truth, they differ in opinion as to how this relation should be understood. For Hegel, phenomenology is the process in which being and truth are mediated in and

through spirit. According to Heidegger, phenomenology should show how being withdraws itself in its coming to presence within the clearing. For Fink, phenomenology should describe earth as the dark preceding and enabling ground of the appropriation of truth. Because Fink focuses his attention on the relation between being and truth and is not scandalized by the dialectical, he remains closer and truer to Hegel's own intentions than Heidegger. Whereas Fink uses phenomenology to push his interpretation to the limits of the text, Heidegger steps beyond those limits and attempts to understand what has remained unsaid in the text.

## NOTES

1. Martin Heidegger, *Frühe Schriften, Gesamtausgabe*, Bd. 1 (Frankfurt am Main: Vittorio Klostermann, 1978), p. 411.

2. Martin Heidegger and Karl Jaspers, *Briefwechsel 1920–1963* (Frankfurt am Main: Vittorio Klostermann, 1990), p. 123.

3. Martin Heidegger, *Der Deutsche Idealismus (Fichte, Schelling, Hegel) und die philosophischen Problemlage der Gegenwart, Gesamtausgabe* Bd. 28 (Frankfurt am Main: Vittorio Klostermann, 1997), pp. 195–232.

4. Martin Heidegger, *Hegels Phänomenologie des Geistes, Gesamtausgabe*, Bd. 32 (Frankfurt am Main: Vittorio Klostermann, 1980). English translation: *Hegel's Phenomenology of Spirit*, trans. Parvis Emad and Kenneth Maly (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1994). I will refer to this volume of the *Gesamtausgabe* as GA32 and to the English translation as HPS.

5. Eugen Fink, *Hegel. Phänomenologische Interpretation der "Phänomenologie des Geistes"* (Frankfurt am Main: Vittorio Klostermann, 1977); hereafter cited as Fink. This work is based on Fink's winter semester 1966–1967 and summer semester 1967 lecture courses on Hegel's *Phenomenology of Spirit*. See Fink, p. 358.

6. GA 32, p. 17; HPS, p. 12.

7. GA 32, pp. 55–56; HPS, pp. 38–39.

8. GA 32, p. 1; HPS, p. 1.

9. See his letter to Jaspers of 25 June 1929 (footnote 2).

10. GA 32, p. 14; HPS, p. 10.

11. Georg Friedrich Wilhelm Hegel, *Phänomenologie des Geistes*, ed.

Johannes Hoffmeister (Hamburg: Meiner, 1988), p. 20, cited hereafter as PhG. English translation: *Phenomenology of Spirit*, trans. A. V. Miller (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1977), §26; hereafter cited as ET.

12. GW9, pp. 13 and 21; ET, §16 and 27.

13. For details, see the introduction by Wolfgang Bonsiepen in GW9, pp. xvii–xxix.

14. GA 32, p. 16; HPS, p. 11.

15. GA 32, p. 22; HPS, p. 15.

16. GA 32, p. 23; HPS, p. 16.

17. Ibid.

18. GA 32, p. 25; HPS, p. 17.

19. GA 32, p. 28; HPS, p. 19.

20. GA 32, p. 31; HPS, p. 22.

21. GA 32, p. 34; HPS, p. 24.

22. GA 32, p. 35; HPS, p. 25.

23. GA 32, p. 38; HPS, p. 27.

24. GA 32, p. 54; HPS, p. 37.

25. GA 32, p. 43; HPS, p. 30.

26. GA 32, p. 45; HPS, p. 32.

27. Otto Pöggeler, *Hegels Idee einer Phänomenologie des Geistes* (Freiburg and Munich: Karl Alber Verlag, 1973), pp. 216–23.

28. Ibid.

29. Fink, p. 126.

30. Fink, p. 352.

31. Fink, p. 12.

32. Fink, p. 11.

33. Fink, p. 12 [PhG, p. 14; ET, §17].

34. Fink, p. 14.

35. Fink, p. 16.

36. Fink, p. 20.

37. Fink, p. 21.

38. Fink, p. 22.

39. Fink, p. 25.

40. Fink, p. 26.

41. Fink, p. 30.

42. PhG, p. 34; §46.

43. Fink, p. 32.

44. Fink, p. 32.

45. Fink, pp. 35–36.
46. Fink, pp. 37–38 and 46.
47. PhG, p. 59; §75.
48. Fink, p. 38.
49. Fink, p. 39.
50. Fink, p. 41.
51. Fink, p. 41.
52. Fink, p. 42.
53. Fink, p. 70 [PhG, p. 63; ET, §81].
54. Fink, pp. 44–45.
55. Fink, p. 50.
56. Fink, p. 50.
57. Fink, p. 57 [PhG, p. 68; ET, §89].
58. GA 32, p. 63; HPS, p. 45.
59. GA 32, p. 64; HPS, p. 46 [PhG, p. 69; ET, § 90].
60. GA 32, p. 64; HPS, p. 46.
61. GA 32, p. 67; HPS, p. 48.
62. GA 32, p. 72; HPS, p. 51.
63. GA 32, p. 75; HPS, pp. 53–54.
64. GA 32, p. 76; HPS, p. 54.
65. GA 32, p. 77; HPS, p. 54.
66. GA 32, p. 80; HPS, p. 57.
67. GA 32, p. 80; HPS, pp. 56–57.
68. See also GA 32, pp. 98–101; HPS, pp. 69–71.
69. GA 32, pp. 82–83; HPS, p. 58.
70. GA 32, p. 84; HPS, p. 59.
71. GA 32, p. 85; HPS, p. 60.
72. GA 32, p. 87; HPS, p. 61.
73. GA 32, p. 89; HPS, p. 63.
74. GA 32, p. 90; HPS, p. 64 [PhG, p. 78; ET, §110].
75. GA 32, p. 95; HPS, p. 67.
76. GA 32, p. 96; HPS, p. 68 [PhG, pp. 72–73; ET, §101]
77. GA 32, p. 96; HPS, p. 68.
78. GA 32, p. 100; HPS, p. 71.
79. GA 32, p. 101; HPS, p. 71 [PhG, p. 74; ET, §106].
80. GA 32, p. 102; HPS, p. 72.
81. GA 32, p. 102; HPS, p. 72.
82. Fink, p. 57.
83. Fink, p. 58.



84. Fink, p. 79.
85. Fink, p. 60.
86. Fink, p. 61. Fink also rejects Heidegger's conviction that dialectics is an embarrassment of thinking.
87. Fink, pp. 61–62.
88. Fink, p. 63.
89. Fink, p. 63 [PhG, p. 69; ET, §91].
90. Fink, p. 64.
91. Fink, p. 66.
92. Fink, p. 66.
93. Fink, pp. 72–73.
94. Fink, p. 71.
95. Fink, p. 75.
96. Fink, p. 75 [PhG, p. 72; ET, §100].
97. Fink, p. 76.
98. Fink, p. 77 [PhG, pp. 73–74; ET, §103].
99. Fink, p. 78 [PhG, p. 74; ET, §105].
100. Fink, p. 85.
101. Fink, p. 85 [Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, *Gesammelte Werke* 9: *Phänomenologie des Geistes*, ed. Wolfgang Bonsiepen and Reinhard Heede (Hamburg: Meiner, 1980), p. 67; PhG, p. 75; ET §106].
102. Fink, p. 86.
103. Fink, p. 86 [PhG, p. 75; ET, §107].
104. Fink, p. 87.
105. Fink, p. 88.
106. Fink, p. 89 [PhG, p. 77; ET, §109].



# SCHELLING IN HEGEL'S *PHENOMENOLOGY* *Verstand, Vernunft, Wissen*

MICHAEL G. VATER

While the preface to Hegel's *Phenomenology of Spirit* contains well-known passages<sup>1</sup> that refer either to Schelling's version of identity-philosophy or to the clumsy imitations of his students, there are substantial sections of the work itself which mount sustained criticism of Schelling's *Naturphilosophie* and of the method of static identification of differences that he used to construct early versions of the "System of Identity." While the case has been made in existing literature that the preface's comments refer to Schelling's followers, and the same argument can be used to cover the remarks about the philosophy of nature in the *Verstand* chapter, close analysis of §803, near the work's culmination, suggests that Hegel was occupied only with first-rank figures or cultural movements there—the secularization of religious consciousness, the Enlightenment, Kant, Fichte, *and Schelling*—not with minor figures or 'disciples'. If Schelling is the target of Hegel's final and position-defining distinc-

tion—Spirit is *not* substance, but substance *and* subject—it is plausible to read all earlier statements in the work that look like they might be criticisms of Schelling as remarks *intended* to be critical of him.

This chapter falls into five sections. The first looks to the work's culminating chapter for a clue to the structure of the *Phenomenology* and to explain the work's curious jumping about from epistemology to psychology and morals and back again. In the second section, I present an overview of Hegel's substantial criticisms of Schelling.<sup>2</sup> The subsequent three sections closely follow Hegel's presentation and critical sublation of Schelling's views in the epistemological chapters: Understanding, Observing Reason, and Absolute Knowledge. Since §803 of Absolute Knowledge contains Hegel's crystallization of the critique of modernity, including Fichte's idealism and Schelling's identity-philosophy, and since this text is the threshold to Hegel's climactic enunciation that in absolute knowing subject has become substance while cognitively absorbing all reality into itself as content, I draw the conclusion that Schelling's early version of the philosophy of identity is a privileged point of access to Hegel's fully subjectivized version thereof. It is Hegel's alone that merits the name absolute idealism, however, since the only name available to designate the stance of thinking that has gathered all being and found only itself therein is 'idea', the subject-like thought that inwardly organizes and holds together the wealth of substance developed in nature and in the social world.

## **I. THE STRUCTURE OF THE PHENOMENOLOGY: GEWISSEIT, GEWISSEN, WISSEN**

Paradoxical though it may seem, it is the *Phenomenology's* final chapter that provides the hermeneutical key to the whole work, for when religious consciousness with its felt and symbolized world-reconciliation passes over into the self-conscious inwardness of absolute knowing, it carries along with it all previous content as surpassed and assimilated. Paragraphs 788 through 790 elaborate the

logic of the situation. In its culminating phase, cognition marries its objects in their externality with its own formal inwardness, combines the immediacy of perception and desire with the mediation of understanding and socially educated (or 'ethical') action, and comes simultaneously to intuit the 'I' as a thing and the 'thing' as an 'I'.<sup>3</sup>

Let us look to this situation in some detail and appreciate that what comes to light in the *Phenomenology's* final chapter is the explicit nature of rational cognition. After stating that spirit as self-conscious knowing has developed (in modernity, to speak from the social-historical perspective) out of the background of matured religious consciousness, Hegel notes that at this stage, knowing's self-comprehension has assumed an explicitly syllogistic nature: its object is in part the immediacy of being, in part the mediation of perception or being-for-other, and in part the universality of *Verstand*—general knowledge conveyed by conventionally designated signs. As a 'syllogism' or thinking-together of thing, perception, and essence, the conceptual moment of this knowing comes to light only in the process of its generation. As a cognition of its object, the knowledge generated by the *understanding* is analytical and partial; knowing mediated through understanding appears as mere accumulation, a number of disconnected shapes. Thus the movement of conventional (*verständlich*) cognition is external and accidental to its object: analysis and synthesis.<sup>4</sup>

At a higher level of operation, self-consciousness turns these superficial cognitive techniques inward upon itself and seeks to know itself as an object in the world. It is led to this operation by a sense of confidence, developed from its cognitive conquest of objective or indifferent being. It begins to seek and to find itself everywhere in indifferent being, and *as indifferent being*. Comprehending a totality of objects through these cognitive techniques, reason views the subject itself as an object among objects and assimilates itself to the world. In this attitude, it becomes observing *reason* and attempts to work with the abstract proposition: "The I is a thing." Dissolving its 'soul' or essentially cognitive nature through reductive analysis, the attitude of reason leaves the internal, spiritual dimension of the cognitive situation untouched and unexplored. Knowing that forgets that it is knowing (and thus more than the object of knowledge that

it *also* is) loses the essential reference point of subjectivity and becomes lost in a world of indifferent, unrelated objects. If cognition is essentially neurochemistry, spirit can only appear as dead, crucified on "the place of the skull."<sup>5</sup>

Hegel's next three paragraphs (791–93) explore how spirit first becomes present in self-consciousness on the basis of the cognitive and ethical stances of understanding and reason. What at first seems to have mere cognitive significance is seen to have an associated moral significance, and what at first seems to be merely a moral stance is seen to have a cognitive significance as well, until in spirit we see at last a full union of knowing and agency (because each essentially involves self-relation or the subjectivity of self-consciousness). In displaying these transformations, these paragraphs exhibit the 'secret' structure of the *Phenomenology*, expressed in what we might call the 'punning of spirit': *Gewissheit*, the certainty of immediate cognition, transforms itself into *Gewissen*, conscience or internal awareness (of the social or ethical situation), which in turn is raised up into *Wissen*, spiritual knowing.

The first utterance of spirit, elevated beyond *Verstand* and *Vernunft*, is: "The thing is I." Though observing reason tries to objectify its very knowing and assert that the I is a thing, the infinite judgment it expresses turns about on itself and produces the converse. An infinite judgment is a denial of an absolute disjunction or the assertion of an absolute contradiction—infinity in Hegel's sense of the term, or antinomy. One contradiction is as good (or bad) as another, ordinary logic tells us, so for "The I is a thing" we can substitute "The thing is I." So from the self-lost, unspiritual stance of the materialist cognitive agenda comes a first spiritual assertion: the thing has being only in relation to the I, only in a connection of agency or being used for a purpose. This is the practical stance of utilitarianism, which Hegel calls the cultural stage of pure "*Einsicht und Aufklärung*." It represents a higher stage of the subjectivism first seen in the self-certainty of sensation: *Gewissheit*. The certain presence of the object in its mere being is transformed into the mediated presence of utility: being at the disposal of an agent.<sup>6</sup>

Knowing the 'thing' as 'I' in its immediate objective existence, as

the means externally at hand for a purpose of general significance, leaves the thing undeveloped and inessential. It must be contracted into pure will and essence, fully merged with the immediate I-ness of the agent, or evolve into a situation where agency and object or goal become one: conscience, *Gewissen*. In moral self-consciousness, says Hegel, knowing is aware that it is essential, that the object of its willing is not extrinsic, but is itself; thus it disengages from an external incentive or eventual result and floats free of the determinacy of existence. It is no longer a wobbly alternation between, at one moment, positing itself as self-certain but alienated and, at the next, positing itself as worldly existence or thing. It is self-confirming, turned back on itself, and has become essence. When it acts, the object of conscience is nothing other than itself.<sup>7</sup>

Thus the subject's *certainty* about its knowing a thing other than itself has become in *conscience* true self-certainty. As both 'con-science' and '*Ge-wissen*' suggest, spirit coincides with itself in a higher stage of knowing-and-acting than simple sensation involved. It coincides with itself because it has doubled itself—or created two roles, one subjective and one objective, and simultaneously placed itself in both.

In the situation of moral self-consciousness, however, where the subject binds itself to a determinate existence because of its considered willing, what ties together essence and determinate existence, the agent's willing, and the worldly situation that is its object is the subject's knowing. Spirit's being and essence is *Wissen*, universality and the subject's self-knowing identified. Not that this knowing is an uncomplicated situation: Spirit inflicts its will (or its understanding of the ethical situation and what is called for) in a gesture of empty universality, acting for the sake of duty. Ignoring both motivation and result, action violates the texture of the situation in all its particularity, with the result that harm is done, but done (of course) for the sake of duty. Moral conscience must return to itself and reconcile its opposed universal and determinate aspects—its mismatched sense of duty and its reading of the situation, clumsily sundered in the inappropriate act—in forgiveness. When self-reconciled, spirit is fully self-conscious and universal because it has been thoroughly self-examined, tested, and self-repaired. Hegel packs all of this developed content into the

simple word 'knowing', for spirit's primary self-knowledge is from the situation of acting in a world of its own making, where acting inevitably means doing wrong, and where discovery of self lies in the subsequent surrender and self-renunciation. Yet it is precisely in the healing over of such duality in its self-consciousness, in its reconciliation with itself, that spirit advances to the stage of *Wissen*.<sup>8</sup>

With this, Hegel completes his picture of spirit's climb from immediacy (*Gewissenheit*) to mediated essentiality (*Gewissen*) and finally to universality (*Wissen*). In this simple picture, he has shown how self-conscious cognition essentially involves knowing the world external to it, altering it to suit its considered needs and values, and how, with a checkered record of success and failure in its attempts at world-construction, it finally comes to a reflected (or morally reconciled) self-knowledge, where 'self' signifies both the singular agent and the universal (or autonomous) I embodied in a culture's institutions, norms, and fundamental actions.

These few paragraphs, then, furnish the key to the *Phenomenology* and to its odd, nonlinear juxtaposition of contents from epistemology, cognitive psychology, morality, social analysis, and the 'high' cultural spheres of art and religion. The development from *Gewissenheit* to *Gewissen* to *Wissen* is a process of linguistic simplification that marks an inward complication. Spirit, self-conscious knowing that has experientially achieved the status of universality, exists in directly cognitive, moral, and socially mediated forms, and comes to cultivated I-hood only through by repeatedly cycling through this process.

We now turn to the immanent critique of Schelling's identity philosophy that is embedded in important sections of the *Phenomenology of Spirit*—those that correspond to *Gewissenheit* and to *Wissen* itself.

## 2. THE PHENOMENOLOGY'S CRITIQUE OF SCHELLING: AN OVERVIEW

The often discussed polemics of the preface aside, Schelling's philosophy receives detailed attention inside the work's body, in the any-



mous, historical-systematic style of exposition that Hegel would later name "dialectic." In this dialectical discussion, philosophical and cultural ideas insert themselves into the discussion as general 'views', detached not only from their authors' names but also from the contingent chronology of their appearance. These views assert themselves on their own merits and fall apart from their own deficiencies—that at least is the feint of Hegel's methodology. It provides him a convenient way of partially associating himself with and partially dissociating himself from positions that are provisionally true, but which will not stand as truths once criticized and tested, i.e., examined against the full range of systematic options available. The particular sections of the *Phenomenology* where Schelling's philosophy is examined are those most closely linked with the claim that philosophy can and should be *Wissenschaft*, that Philosophy is at hand as a finished and self-sufficient body of knowledge, a science. Hegel's criticisms are aimed specifically at the *Naturphilosophie* and metaphysics of identity that Schelling developed at Jena during the years of the Schelling-Hegel collaboration on the *Critical Journal* (1801–1802). While Hegel somewhat presciently discussed Schelling's metaphysics of identity in the *Differenzschrift* of 1801, that work displays detailed knowledge only of the *System of Transcendental Idealism* (1800). It is natural that, in his first published work, Hegel would want to—for the philosophically sophisticated reader, at least—address his association with Schelling's eponymously titled system, politely address its deficiencies, and demonstrate in what sense his own identity philosophy deserved to supplant that of the *Darstellung meines Systems der Philosophie* (1801) and *Bruno* (1802).

A preliminary justification for seeing a refutation of Schelling's views as one of the principal motives in the epistemological sections of the *Phenomenology* can be found in a close reading of paragraphs 803 to 805 of the culminating chapter, Absolute Knowing, and from the contents of paragraph 803 in particular. In this paragraph, Hegel draws a line from the "oriental" substance of Spinoza, through the universal utility and arbitrary freedom of the Enlightenment and its political revolution, to the epistemic system of Kant ("the union of substance and time"), to the abstract identity put forth as I in Fichte's

*Wissenschaftslehre*. Schelling's philosophy of identity, patterned on Spinoza's monism, asserts a fundamental identity or sameness (*Gleichheit*) of subject and substance. Subject-object identity, however, the ultimate presupposition for a knowing that would be absolute, collapses into the unarticulated sameness of mere substance if turned into the ultimate theorem of metaphysics—*unless* there is some fundamental gesture toward knowing and action in that first unity. If the identity of subject and substance has the identity only of a thing or substance and not also that of a *subject* and *agent*, the first principle or the absolute will be an intuition empty of contents. This intuition could rank as absolute only if it intuited or thought through pure or abstract unity. But if it is thought so abstractly, all its content falls away and thought is then connected to the absolute only through 'reflection' or subjectively biased cognition. Only if the differentiated contents that typify a concrete subject can be predicated of the absolute principle—in other words, only if substance is *from the first* and primordially subject—can the articulated wealth of contents in a subject's consciousness be ascribed to that principle. Only if wealth of content is built into the absolute principle from the first will that content be grounded in the principle and pertain to it. If this is not so—and this is the case in Schelling's 1801 system—then unity of principle falls abstractly on one side and the detailed contents as the achieved wealth of a knowing subject fall on the other, as contingent knowing or *reflection*. Hegel notes that the 'system' he here criticizes is a system in name only; on one side, it is bare conceptual unity without content, and on the other, it is a mass of contingent facts garnered from perception and 'systematized' from an arbitrary point of view (*reflection*).<sup>9</sup>

Hegel proposes an alternative grounded in spirit's becoming immanent in its contents, and, by reason of its differentiation from this objectified self, in its attaining the status of *concept*: mediated immediacy, or self-awareness returned to itself out of its embodiment in the other. Since its being as negative self-identity is freedom and movement, spirit as conceptual (subject become substance) now understands its contents by moving through them and displaying the stages of determinacy it has assumed and cast off as *surpassed* objec-

tivity.<sup>10</sup> Though Schelling could call his system “mine” from the outside, his system has nothing of the subject *in it*. There is nothing in its contents that intrinsically refers to the subject who systematizes knowledge and who finds itself reflected in it. It is a depiction of a mirror empty of image.

Armed with this preliminary understanding of the difference between Schelling and Hegel, one can find more precise discussions of Schelling's philosophy within the *Phenomenology*. These discussions are located in the chapters Understanding and Observing Reason and deal with the conceptual deficiencies found in the *Naturphilosophie*, both in its treatment of the basics of physics and its more daring forays into biology and chemistry. Under the title of *Verstand*, Hegel explores the deficiencies of Schelling's *Naturphilosophie*, especially in its mature form that depended heavily on Kant's mechanics and on his introduction of a postulated ‘attractive force’ alongside the (empirically validated) repulsive force. If one carefully follows Hegel's line of thought, the work of linear cognition—expressed in the categories and topics of observation, generalization, formulation of law, the doubling of explanation as ‘inverted world’, and the final emergence into infinity—leads beyond the explanation of the world as a constellation of objects into the quite different realm of self-consciousness.<sup>11</sup> One of the glaring defects of Schelling's early identity-philosophy is its lack of a philosophy of spirit. The 1801 *Darstellung* remained incomplete for two related reasons: its inability to make a systematic connection between nature and self-consciousness, and a more specific inability to integrate biological phenomena into an explanation based on polar concepts suitable, if at all, for explaining the basic items of physics. That Hegel is able to criticize the basic epistemic stance of *Naturphilosophie* (as mere meta-description) while simultaneously evoking the infinity characteristic of self-consciousness from the limitations and contradictions of nature (or empirical science) is at once a stunning criticism of Schelling and a remedy for the defects of his *spiritless* ‘System’.

Hegel continues discussion of the conceptual defects of *Naturphilosophie* in Observing Reason, and there focuses on Schelling's attempts to do justice to organic nature and to deduce an animate

inner principle (world-soul) for the whole of nature. In the artificial disengagement that characterizes the *Vernunft* which merely observes and catalogues, 'scientific mind' proceeds by generalization, linear thinking, and the positing of 'internal' organic qualities. These moves, taken singly and collectively, prove themselves incapable of dealing with the fluidity of life—the counterpart of universal consciousness or thought—which can be fully expressed only by *self-consciousness*. Hegel's intention here is to show that the truth of the organic, as it can be formulated by disengaged reason, is the pure thought of lawfulness, emptied of all content. What the concept of law involves, once abstracted from the self-consciousness of the observer and lawgiver, is just the fluidity of pure transition, abstracted from all definite content such as inner or outer, or from supposed organic properties such as sensibility or irritability.<sup>12</sup>

It is against this background demonstration of the ineffectiveness of linear cognition that Hegel finally mounts his attack on the prefabricated, subjectless, and lifeless absolute of the identity philosophy in the *Phenomenology's* final chapter, Absolute Knowing. Evaluated against the contention that in the full version of absolute Philosophy, *subject* is both principle of movement and organization and *substance*, the contents of experience distilled, Schelling's absolute is proved to be empty and lifeless. It is by reason of its situation in self-consciousness as concept, mediated or deferred self-presence, that in the Hegelian system reason as reflection is able to get hold of things in their difference from the absolute, without either throwing them into the "abyss of identity" or merely borrowing them from experience.<sup>13</sup> Spirit is not just the collapse of inwardness into state or substance, or just the retroflection of the bare contents of consciousness into empty inwardness, neither abstract nature-as-such nor spirit-as-such. Says Hegel, "spirit is rather a self-movement that objectifies itself and thus loses itself in objective forms in order to return to itself as subject."<sup>14</sup>

Though this brief overview may be accurate, it is abstract and, like anything abstract, is valid only as a summary of the more detailed movements that thought makes through its contents. Before we can acknowledge the fact that there is a sustained critique of Schelling in the *Phenomenology*, we must view it in its fullest extent. As Hegel is

fond of saying, the only acceptable proof in philosophy is the system itself: the philosophical concept that is self-supporting in the sense that it is *sylogistic*, each term mediated by its counterparts. In the next three sections, for the most part, I merely attempt to organize and paraphrase Hegel's ideas. The focus is provided by the topic: Schelling, the deficient artificer of understanding, reason, and knowing—both in the detailed *Naturphilosophie* of 1800–1801 and in the more ambitious project of absolute identity philosophy, expounded (without Hegelian improvements) in the 1801 *Darstellung meines Systems der Philosophie*.<sup>15</sup>

### 3. UNDERSTANDING: THE FALLACY OF OBJECTIVE EXPLANATION

By *understanding*, Hegel means linear thinking, a straightforward attempt by thought to 'capture' its matter directly, while excluding *reflection* or reference to the subject which understands and that subject's situation, intention, and expectation. Understanding thinks it can decontextualize its project, or even remove all reference to the subject in the situation of knowing, and still come away with its prize: essential knowledge. Curiously, though, while attempting to avoid reference to outside matters, the knower included, understanding's attempt constantly veers *into* reflection, due to the limitations of the dichotomizing categories it employs. The essential task of understanding is to incorporate a multitude of phenomena under a common but accurate designation or formula, hence to formulate scientific law. In the course of its efforts, however, the hoped-for stability and universality of law evaporates into particularity, limitation, and episodic self-reference. What follows is Hegel's somewhat complicated depiction of the exact process. The dichotomizing character of understanding's first efforts is stressed, and rightly so, since the kind of intelligence with which humans are endowed has both the glory and the idiocy of complete simplicity built into its sorting apparatus: *this*, not that; *one*, not other; *form*, not content. When this 'idiot simplicity' is brought to the task of formulating laws for nature,

understanding launches into discourse that reproduces or redescribes phenomena, but in no way gets below the surface and disengages something previously unknown. Failing to formulate or find law in diverse phenomena, understanding clarifies only its own limitations, the poverty of its resources. Understanding fails to understand. How does this come about?

Having surpassed the purely external stance of perception, consciousness finds itself with thoughts but is unable to straightaway recognize itself in them. It then projects its thoughts outside and away from itself, as object, an uncharacterized and indeterminate universal. Consciousness defines itself in opposition to the projection, and merely looks on. The object, for its part, remains an undifferentiated mass of being-for-itself and being-in-relation.<sup>16</sup> When these contrasting factors emerge from the objectified universal and distinguish themselves as *content* and *form*, the object becomes a juxtaposition of a plurality of matters and their self-reflected unity. Understanding pretends that this differentiation and juxtaposition is something that happens in and on the part of the object. Though these aspects pass into one another and merge—a suspiciously mind-like activity—understanding insists on their nominal distinction and so applies the names *force* and *expression* to the interplay. In truth, there is but one content hiding under this contrast of names, but understanding, loath to look inward and see in itself both the object and the process of its cognition, conceals this unity-in-diversity.<sup>17</sup>

Hegel's text is not very clear about the specific context of understanding's endeavor, but it seems safe to say he is thinking of the cognitive process involved in the refinement of modern physics, from Tycho Brahe's laborious but mute observations onto Kepler's powerful framing of the three discrete laws of celestial motion, and from there to Newton's grand conceptual-mathematical unification of mechanics into the theory of universal gravitation. Observing this march of 'empirical' science from its endpoint, Hegel knows that the completed theory, when pursued to its theoretical foundation as Kant did in the *Metaphysical Foundations of Natural Science*, depends not merely on items passively observed (discrete bodies repulsing one another) but on the active intervention of intellect in supplying the-

oretical entities (like the *postulated* 'attractive force'). Its merely observational stance has been a sham all along. If Kant famously characterized the Copernican nature of a priori knowledge as the condition where "all that we cognize a priori about things is what we put into them," Hegel extends the view to a posteriori or empirical cognition: when we believe we merely observe and so come to an understanding of what we perceive, all we really understand is *what we put into our description*.<sup>18</sup> But in saying this, I am anticipating the development of understanding itself, as Hegel let it phenomenologically self-describe.

When understanding attempts to account for the duplicity of force and expression by doubling the forces (as in the Newtonian-Kantian addition of attractive force to repulsive force to explain gravitation), it maintains the illusion of the duplicity of forces, yet shows their unity by explaining that one force subsists or 'expresses itself' only when *solicited* by the other. Hegel does not tarry to comment that the notion of forces soliciting one another is psychological, not physical, but presses on to point out that soliciting and being-solicited is a universal relation. Wherever mind distinguishes things as two, the boundary will not stay still, since it is mind-imposed. Since the two forces are inextricably linked, the second force, as soliciting the first, is essential to it, while the first, as soliciting the second, is equally essential to it. Though we attempt to distinguish them as active and passive when we speak of 'solicitation', they in fact pass these distinctions back and forth since they mutually solicit each other.<sup>19</sup> Materially, then, the two forces are but one force; repulsive force and attractive force are but one thing: gravitation. We may try formally to maintain their distinction as active and passive, but the distinction vanishes. Understanding is forced back to square one and must try again to think *force* purely as such, but here again polar dichotomy breaks out. (Why does dichotomy erupt again? Because understanding again attempts to enforce its idea of simplicity of the object, in ignorance of the 'Heisenbergian' situation of knowing: that cognition is relation, and whatever is cognized is cast into the form of being-in-relation, and hence loses its simplicity, its being-in-itself.) When force is understood *as thought*, thought itself doubles or takes

on duplicitous form: mere thought and realized thought, the empty *concept of the understanding* juxtaposed to the rich, realized *concept qua concept*, which Hegel here calls the “*internal dimension*.”<sup>20</sup> Force, as the interplay of forces, falls on one side of a distinction that we understand (the external), while the concept of force falls on the other (the inside). Since the ‘sides’ are held together in the cognitive project by (a form of) reason, it is the *process of appearance* that holds the internal and external dimensions together. Furthermore, the same content is duplicated on each side of the divide. The play of forces appears as the expression of the inner law—as if appearances observed outside and law formulated within were different in fact, or the process of ‘appearance’ of phenomena under law was anything different from the ‘expression’ of forces. In formulating the idea of a world of appearance that operates according to law, understanding fashions the first appearance of reason, a vanishing rainbow world permanently appearing on the horizon of the empirical: *the supersensible world* of unchanging law, in contrast to the vanishing sensible whirl of forces observed in the here-and-now.<sup>21</sup> Though the details of Hegel’s narrative are murky, one can hardly help noticing that the more understanding attempts to simply capture what is and translate it from observation into theory, the more theoretical entities and distinctions are multiplied and the simple eludes its grasp. The more mind attempts to describe what is ‘obviously’ outside itself, the more it refers to itself and gets lost in its internal movements of making and abolishing distinctions.

From this point, Hegel’s narrative veers away from the empirical and observations and turns to the process of explanation that is understanding’s true project. The inner world, initially empty, gets (emptily) filled up in thinking as a *realm of law*, a permanent image of ever-changing appearances, or rather the permanent original or archetype from which appearances arise as images. In this realm of law, as understanding elaborates it, many laws are reduced to one law, e.g., the fall of a terrestrial body and the laws of celestial mechanics reduce themselves to the law of universal attraction. As understanding comprehends it, universal attraction is seen to be nothing but the *concept of law* itself, the idea that the difference between one thing and



another is a constant, so that everything is relatable to everything to else.<sup>22</sup> At this point, Hegel's narrative, attempting to refine the notion of law and lawful phenomena, finds itself returned to the phenomena which were its point of origin: physical forces. Law can be expressed abstractly and mathematically, as a constant difference of independent variables, or it can be expressed in a reflected or psychological sense, as *power* or *force*. But 'power' is just a way of naming independent factors such as space, time, velocity, mass, or light. It merely psychologizes the abstract relationship among these variables, whose constant variation among themselves is the lawfulness of the law. The two senses of law fall back into one, and law is revealed to be essentially *tautology*, redescription. Caught in the recognition of its own senseless repetition, understanding sees that all the *process* in its activities—observation, formulation, generalization, refinement, etc.—pertains to it alone and not to its object, that the whole aim of *explanation* is to present distinctions that do not amount to a difference.<sup>23</sup> As many a professor knows, the game of understanding is to keep talking, until sleep, boredom, or 'intellectual satiety' overtake the original question which provoked all the theorizing.

The upshot is that the supersensible world or the realm of law itself is doubled. The original one just reproduces the contents of perception, tautologically linking a supersensible *explanans* to a sensible *explanandum*. Explanation on this level merely intellectualizes the sensible. But understanding goes on to invoke a second inner world as ground of the first. It explains in exactly the same empty way but makes a *second supersensible* quality the ground of an associated and opposite sense-quality in the perceived world. Reverse explanation ensues: sweet is really sour, dark is really light, oxygen is really hydrogen, revenge is suicide, lawful guilt is pardon. This is the *inverted world*. It hardly seems appropriate for the explanation of the physical, but it is useful in describing human action and social phenomena, where temporal distinctions can lessen the shock of outright contradiction. On the level of agency, inversion is explanatory: the evil deed is explained by the good intention, the perverse act by its beneficial result.<sup>24</sup>

The whole content of the inverted world is the thinking of contradictions, the attempt to conceive the other in oneself. This internal,

intrinsically posited opposition is *infinity*; the very hallmark of reason according to the Jena *Logic*. The basic scheme of infinity is this: a *self-relation* is posited which is a *self-doubling*, i.e., a *becoming other*. This doubling, says Hegel, is the becoming of the self-same, a simultaneous positing and setting aside of itself.<sup>25</sup> In other contexts, one can perhaps come to appreciate that this is the core of reason. Here, however, as posited in the understanding, infinity is but a process of the understanding: *explanation*. In any explanation, Hegel presciently intuits, what the explanation explains is not the supposed *explanandum* but the *explanans* itself: "Understanding's clarifications finally amount only to this: the description of what self-consciousness is."<sup>26</sup> The truth of understanding, then, in its endeavor to explain the object of consciousness, is the *infinity of self-consciousness*. If I undertake to understand and explain the other, the object of consciousness, I introduce difference into the undifferentiability of self-consciousness; yet, if I differentiate myself from myself, there is no real othering, for I remain myself as self-consciousness: "Consciousness of another, of an object in general, is itself necessarily self-consciousness, self-reflection, consciousness of oneself in one's being other."<sup>27</sup>

We have hurriedly reviewed thirty paragraphs of Hegel's critique of empiricism. How does it apply to Schelling? Schelling is not named in the text, but then neither is Newton or Kant. What Hegel explores here and dialectically destroys from within, however, is the standpoint of a realistic (or objectivistic) account of reality, whether that reality be physical nature or the broader range of things that fall under 'first philosophy'. Objectivism is the work of an intelligence posed over against some reality external to it, and which promises a 'literal' explanation of it, divorced from any account of the knowing subject and of the conditions and limits of such an attempt at knowing. Empiricism is functional at the level of perception or observation; when it begins to explain, generalize, and theorize, however, intelligence injects itself and its criteria into its project and so becomes covertly self-referential. Objectivism, whether in the guise of *Naturphilosophie*—the philosophical reconstruction of the phenomena of natural science on an a priori basis—or in the guise of an absolute metaphysics, is fallacious in its lack of heuristic consciousness, in its

abstraction from the innate self-referentiality of *explanation*. Leaving aside for a moment the issue of *Naturphilosophie*, I think one can read this section of the *Phenomenology* as a commentary on the aridity of Schelling's initial attempts at articulating an absolute or objective idealism in the 1801 *Darstellung meines Systems der Philosophie* and the 1802 *Fernere Darstellungen*. In the former, Schelling posits a reason that transcends vulgar understanding as the vehicle of philosophy, but since discussion of methodology is postponed and no account proffered of how absolute identity is embodied in 'spiritual' (psychological, ethical, aesthetic, and religious) gradations of phenomena, the absolute described there is as dead and external as Spinoza's substance.<sup>28</sup> The latter work invokes 'intellectual intuition' as the medium of philosophy, and explains its methodological embodiment as 'philosophical construction'—locating a phenomena in the proper place in the theoretical taxonomy deployed—but it, too, is devoid of reference to the subject that knows, to natural consciousness, even to transcendental conditions of knowing as such.<sup>29</sup> If one reads this section of the *Phenomenology* as a commentary on Schelling's early efforts in identity philosophy, one can see the 'inverted world' in Schelling's metaphysical inventions. Though Schelling's objectivism, or at least his *apparent* departure from the constraints of transcendental philosophy, may be somewhat excused by the grandeur of his systematic aims and the encyclopedic completeness of his structural taxonomy for all phenomena, physical and psycho-social, Hegel's shrewd insight that at higher levels theory only redescribes itself and justifies its methodology—instead of explaining what it intended to explain—considerably deflates this defense. The collapse of the postulated realm of law beyond appearances into the tautological mutterings of the "will to explain" can also be viewed as a commentary on the formulaic nature of Schelling's notion of the 'potencies', the repetitively ordered grades of phenomena specified by the empty law: "Qualitative indifference in the whole, appears as [balanced, reciprocal] quantitative difference in all of the parts."<sup>30</sup> Finally, I want to underscore the radical nature of the 'cure' Hegel proposes for this situation: consciousness must come to terms with infinity (or self-contradiction) not by fleeing it,

but by embracing it as its own intrinsic nature. This is the 'Golgotha' solution that the *Phenomenology* proposes for the conundrums of the finite, conflicted nature of human action and theory. In contrast, Schelling's flight into the 'inverted world' of abstract identity philosophy is simply flight to the supersensible.

#### **4. OBSERVING REASON: BIOLOGY AND THE FAILURE OF NATURPHILOSOPHIE**

Hegel continues to explore the territory of empirical science and its techniques—and their failure when extrapolated to a more universal domain—in Observing Reason. Earlier parts of the chapter deal with the sterility of using fixed distinctions in attempts to describe and classify natural phenomena in general, while later sections are devoted to the challenge that biological phenomena pose, both for contemporary empirical science and for the meta-empirical enterprise of *Naturphilosophie*. Since, at the time of the *Phenomenology*'s composition, Schelling was chiefly known for his efforts in philosophy of nature, and since he had publicly waffled on the issue of whether to put mechanics or life at the theoretical center of the enterprise, Hegel's account of how biology escapes observational-descriptive accounting has Schelling's efforts plainly in view. The fact that his own lectures on the philosophy of nature do much the same as Schelling had done, however, is testimony to the enduring nature of the problem of the 'scientific' treatment of life and mind.

Reason, the successor to understanding, is given a general description in the chapter's opening pages.<sup>31</sup> It surpasses the perceptual-descriptive stance of understanding in that it consciously and confidently transforms its own surmises (*Meinungen*) into universals; it does so because, in viewing the world as its own through the lens of its own constructs, it comes to apprehend itself as the core actuality of the world. As it cognizes 'things', observing reason turns them into unities of thought and being, i.e., entities that are beings but at the same time 'I'.

Starting out in the attitude of naive empiricism, the *instinct of reason* inspects experience, but fails to realize it is looking at universals, not sensible *thises*. Unable to deal with the sheer multitude of specimens, observation sets about describing things, grouping certain properties and sorting some out as essential and some as inessential. It thus stumbles toward a classificatory system in which classes are distinguished from one another other by fixed differentiae.<sup>32</sup> But there is an instability inherent in the system of classifications that emerges, due to the tension between individual cases observed in nature which show variation (being-in-relation) and the supposed permanency (being-in-themselves) of the fixed determinations deployed as the classificatory scheme. If reason attempts to correct its lexicon of genera in light of the empirical variations it observes, it blurs the genera and overthrows the explanatory scheme.<sup>33</sup>

Reason-instinct, however, presses on toward abstract *lawfulness* when it despairs of correcting the table of genera by simple observation. It stays true to experience in that it sticks to the facts and resolutely excludes what it thinks "ought to happen" or what it fancies "might happen." Looking for laws and regularities, it seeks to arithmetically extend its grasp of facts by adding them one to another; thus it arrives at *probabilities*. In this move, says Hegel, reason grasps the being of law, but not its concept. It wrongly thinks that a law is valid if and only if (a) it is exemplified in experience and (b) it is conceptual in nature; the second condition alone should suffice. Reason next purifies its laws by separating key determinations of phenomena from the contingent differences that might be associated with them, e.g., isolating the coordinated positive and negative charges of electricity from 'glass-electricity' and 'resin-electricity'. It misreads these universal abstract properties, however, and imagines they are "super-sensible sensibles"—abstract items, to be sure, but ones with "bodiless but still objective being."<sup>34</sup> Observing reason, therefore, misconceives its endeavor as a quest for strange objects: concepts that somehow subsist 'in' sensible objects. This misguided objectivism stems from reason's failure to notice itself observing and generalizing. It fails to notice that self-consciousness is the generation of concepts, things that can only spring from the concept.<sup>35</sup>

There are difficulties enough in this descriptive-abstractive approach to natural science when reason's objects are inorganic and inert. When reason turns to organisms, objects whose being is a fluid interchange of determinations wherein none is essential and none is nonessential, further confusion arises. Attempting to formulate laws as before, reason-instinct tries to associate inorganic properties—physical, chemical, geological, geographical ones—with the myriad properties of living beings. There result associative connections, not necessary laws. There is no homology between the organic and inorganic orders because there is no principle or formula for their linkage. Hence, empirical life sciences are missing.<sup>36</sup>

But if reductive description does not work for living beings, *teleology* does, for organisms are subsistent purposes. The living being is what it is through its action, or it is what it is because it achieves the satisfaction of its requirements, needs, and goals. Failing to recognize, however, that subsistent purpose is the very nature of self-consciousness, observing reason posits teleology externally, e.g., as instinct in the animal, where the entity that acts and the purpose for which it acts are sundered.<sup>37</sup> Once again frustrated by misplaced objectivism, reason voices the *contrast* between the actuality of the living being and its conceptual *telos* as a general law—actually an axiom for biological investigation: *the external expresses the internal*. This “inside-outside law” leaves its two sides unrelated and, like its corresponding phase in *Verstand*, imagines that both inside and outside exist in the same way, e.g., as shapes. Here again there is a reduplication of the sensible; this metaphysical redundancy fails to grasp the conceptual nature of one (or both) of the sides.<sup>38</sup>

In attempting to make clear how the internal determines the external, reason leaves to one side the activity of the real elements that makes them disappear in the process and focuses instead on the external: the organic shape, constituted by the ‘organic properties’. The organic properties—which Schelling discussed at length, but never satisfactorily, in many versions of *Naturphilosophie*—are different aspects of the organism's self-relation: (a) *sensibility*, or self-reflection, fluidity of properties; (b) *irritability*, or the organism's reaction to its external environment; (c) *reproduction*, or the formal dimension of

sensibility, reflection as self-maintenance.<sup>39</sup> Reason-instinct then posits an externalization of these organic properties: sensibility as the nervous system (in a higher animal); irritability as its musculature; reproduction as its visceral systems (alimentary and sexual).<sup>40</sup>

But the attempt to advance to science with these posited organic properties falls flat. Observation can indeed find a quantum of reaction to a stimulus, but reason cannot say whether the reaction observed is that of sensibility (the nervous system) or of irritability (the muscular system's motor reaction). Putting a number on a twitch is not telling, insists Hegel. Nor is reason able to say whether what it measures is the intensity of reaction or its extent. The observer ends up with only a number, that of increase or decrease of an arbitrary initial magnitude. In all of this, though it should be moving at the level of law, i.e., of the concept or the a priori foundation of law, reason takes the so-called organic properties as items just present to observation. The organic properties sink to the level of mere sensible properties, or they disappear altogether since they fail to show up in the living organism (and its sheer fluidity of properties) or in the dead outer structure that anatomy exhibits after the fact.<sup>41</sup> The summary failure of reason in its misguided guise of a search for an empirical biology can be stated this way: when the program of associating internal and external determinations is pursued, the organism loses all semblance of lawfulness and reverts to its simple universality—the processive dissolution of all of its determinations in the “Bacchanalian Revel” of sheer life. While at the level of perception and understanding, consciousness has as its object a relation between abstract determinacies, e.g., universal and particular, essence and accident, it really knows neither of the terms but merely effects a transition from one to the other. When reason investigates the living entity, *transition* or process becomes its very object. But since its whole effort is to reify this transition or translate it into a static formula, consciousness here gets hold only of the *thought of a law for organic phenomena*. It cannot imbue the bare thought with content. There is no subsistent or factual aspect of *pure transition*, then, until and unless consciousness turns in upon itself and becomes self-consciousness. Erring in the greatest way possible, reason seizes on

the magnitude of arbitrarily selected qualities—qualities to which the organism itself is indifferent—and produces just *measurements*. Falling back to the level of understanding, biological pseudo-science mumbles things about increase or decrease of sensibility or irritability or speaks of a plainly physical property being “potentiated,” using “German-Latin” to avoid the work of formulating the concept—in proper German, of course.<sup>42</sup> Hegel briefly explores other dead ends of biological science. Organic properties may be reconfigured as specific gravity (mass), cohesion (measure of permeability or its opposite), and self-preservation (proportion between these two). Supposedly, these qualities are more amenable to quantification, but all these objectifying techniques only reduce life once more to a dead item of imaginative-thinking (*Vorstellung*).<sup>43</sup> Finally, reason, fallen to the level of imaginative thinking, returns to the initial relation between species and individual and imagines that species are contained in a super-species, a universal individual: the Earth. The relation between earth and its species is fancied to be that obtaining between consciousness and body in a human individual, but this relationship is conceived in abstraction from living individuals and their place in history. The approach embodies tidbits of reason: *Meinungen*, the beginnings of laws, traces of necessity, and from them it fashions “clever remarks, interesting comparisons, congenial appositions”—all of which, we know, Schelling was good at—but not the concept.<sup>44</sup>

How do these remarks apply to Schelling? Except for the last-mentioned volleys of satire, Hegel is seriously addressing the woeful state of contemporary biology, which was fitful at best and routinely ‘poetic’ in its attempts to extend the rule of law from physics to chemistry and biology. He correctly seizes upon its essential function, the observation, generalization, and formulation of regularities involved in legitimate natural science and forces it to reveal its inadequacy. Consider, for example, the contributions that Carl Eschenmayer and Schelling made to the codification of natural science at the end of the eighteenth century. In 1797, Eschenmayer proposed a program to unify natural science on the basis of a minimal set of concepts—all qualities being viewed as variations of polar opposition, reducible to the contrast between subjectivity and objectivity, and



amenable to numerical analysis in terms of repeating levels (*Potenzen*) of this contrast. Both the contrasting primary qualities and their gradations or level could be pictured on a single line, running leftward from zero (the indifference point) toward the negative infinite and rightward from zero toward the positive immeasurable. If not all natural investigation could be represented in this simple visual scheme, it at least gave Schelling a tool to organize his *Naturphilosophie*. That 'branch' of philosophy, however, soon became equally famous for its failure to adequately place and analyze organic phenomena as for its success in organizing the body of established inorganic science. Hegel's remarks can be read as a devastating critique of Schelling's *Naturphilosophie*, especially of its three methodological ideas: (1) use of the static conceptual contrast between objectivity (negativity) and subjectivity (positivity), with an indifference point or neutral origin between them; (2) repetition of this pattern in levels, grades or "potencies"; and (3) the use of a numerical analysis to represent real qualities—e.g., gravity being the preponderance of objectivity over subjectivity at the level of the first potency, light being the preponderance of subjectivity over objectivity at the second, and reproduction being the balance between objectivity (irritability) and subjectivity (sensitivity) at the level of the third or organic potency. Hegel is adamant about the harm done to philosophy and scientific cognition in general when such fixed, fanciful models and numerical analyses are used for biological phenomena. The fluidity of the life-process points, as Hegel views it, to the self-referential infinity that is ultimately embodied in self-consciousness. The contrast between his vision of *Naturphilosophie* and Schelling's, at least as he adumbrates it in the preface, is that between biology and anatomy: each studies the same subject, though in the latter, the subject is regrettably dead, hence, from the point of view of life, falsely understood.

I pass on to the final section of the *Phenomenology*, in which Schelling is given the dubious honor of being placed in the gallery of philosophic shapes of the history of consciousness as the final defective appearance of spirit—spirit in a deformed guise, not fully self-appreciated and understood. 'Spirited' as he was, Schelling did not feel himself honored in being deemed the valet of Truth.

## 5. ABSOLUTE KNOWING: THE CONVERGENCE OF SUBSTANCE AND SUBJECT

In this chapter's first section, we reviewed evidence of the merely recapitulative, formal-methodological, self-reflexive character of this culminating chapter of the *Phenomenology*. *Wissen* can provide no new content, nothing surpassing the substance of previous stages, taken either as parts or as a whole. But it can gather together the previous stages in inwardizing repetition in order to show that these shapes or "spirits" do in fact all arise as the ferment of one spirit. So Hegel proceeds to walk us through it all again, in hope that we recognize it as our home and realize that we have been looking at nothing other than our self.

Earlier strata of this study of spirit's arising in experience developed their subject-matter one-sidedly, but from different sides. Consciousness as such, the absolute content of spirit, has just been displayed in *religious consciousness* as the ultimate reconciliation of one-self—the self-convergence that puts an end to estrangement. Religion has this ultimate spiritual content, but displays it mythically, in external shape. But formally or on the side of the knowing subject, self-consciousness evolved in an equally one-sided way; it was viewed as pure form, empty knowing, pure self-awareness, or plastic self-reflection capable of assuming any form. This happened chiefly in the chapters on perception, understanding, and observing reason.<sup>45</sup>

The content of absolute, i.e., Christian, religion must now merge with the developed self-consciousness expounded in the chapters on the self-conscious I (beautiful soul) and self-conscious action (desire, morality, the ethical world). Phenomenology will now unite the content of religion with the reflected form of developed agency, or morality. It will do so on the basis of what the thinking through of experience has achieved: on one side, the abstract form of *conceptuality*, on the other, the wealth of content deployed in the developed *shapes of consciousness*.<sup>46</sup>

Though spirit's appearance in consciousness is *Wissen* or scientific knowing, its advent must be prepared for in time and history by forms of incubating social-personal consciousness such as religion. Only on

the basis of such cultural preparation can the existing and self-conscious concept—the I that exists in full objective freedom—start to enjoy the wealth of its inheritance and appreciate its responsibilities. In this course of historical appropriation, the starting point must be a confrontation between the naked, raw I and a primitive religious community which possesses the truth of ultimate human division and reconciliation in an absolute fashion, but one hardly friendly to the subject in her individuality. Only by surrendering the hope of an external reconciliation, or a timeless appropriation of an external and ready-made reconciliation, can the I enter into its own spirituality.<sup>47</sup> Turning from external religion, spirit seeks enlightenment.

In a state that Hegel calls “observation,” thought takes the initial steps of self-discovery and personal self-return as *philosophical knowing*. There are five stages to this ‘Enlightenment’: (1) It first discovers its existence as thought, because in its thinking and there alone it is assured of concrete being (Descartes); (2) it evolves a deformed philosophical version of the religion of light: it discovers the unity of thought and being in the unity of being and space (Spinoza); (3) spirit is repelled, however, from this sterile and lifeless identity and shocked into individuality (Leibniz?); (4) the spiritual individual grasps her relation to the world and to the community in terms of action and utility (Enlightenment, Diderot); and (5) finally turning inward, spirit expresses its freedom and substantiality as “I = I,” the unity of being and thought expressed as the identity of thought and time (Kant, Fichte).<sup>48</sup>

Hegel then turns from this summary rendition of modern philosophy to its latest chapter, the *philosophy of Schelling*. Having seized itself self-consciously as I = I, spirit achieves a triple self-expression: (1) identity is understood as the identity of the self-same and the nullity of absolute difference (Identity Philosophy); (2) grasped in another way, time’s restless and placeless activity collapses in upon itself and the objectified rest of pure extension results; the self-identity of the I finds itself expressed in nature (*Naturphilosophie*); or again (3), the self is grasped as a pure self-identity, as spiritual self-coincidence, or as self-identity which is both *subject* and *substance* (philosophy of spirit, i.e., of art and religion).<sup>49</sup>

Hegel continues this analysis, clearly aimed at Schelling's philosophy and its deficient grasp of the role of subjectivity or self-consciousness:

This identity (*Gleichheit*) is perfect and immediate coincidence (*Einheit*) with itself, or *this subject* is *substance* just as much as it is subject. Substance, taken solely as such, would be intuition empty of contents or intuition of a content whose further specification would consist solely of accidents, and which would [consequently] be without necessity. If this were the case, substance could rank as absolute only insofar as it is intuited or thought as *absolute* unity, and all its contents, viewed in their differentiated character, would fall to the side of *reflection*. On this view, reflection would not pertain to substance because it would not itself be subject, or self-reflection; it would not be conceived as spirit. Yet if one must try to furnish an account of the contents on this basis, in part it would have to consist in drowning them in the deep abyss of the absolute, and in part in an external treatment that [merely] borrows them from sense perception. [But if done on this basis,] science seems to grasp things, their difference from itself, and the differentiation of the manifold of beings—without being able to conceive or comprehend how and why it gets hold of them.<sup>50</sup>

Hegel then explains how philosophical science founded on phenomenology (or the reflective experience of consciousness) can be something different than this sterile and abstract solidification of unity. The key lies in the way the contents are developed and comprehended, neither submerged in an intuited but inarticulable unity nor borrowed from perception. Says Hegel:

Spirit, however, has shown itself to us neither as mere self-consciousness retroflected into pure inwardness, nor as mere subjection of inwardness, utility, and differentiation into substance. Spirit is rather a self-movement that objectifies itself and thus loses itself in objective forms, in order to return to itself as subject, turn its objectified shapes into its contents, and thus both cancel and preserve the differentiated character of its contents, its objectified forms.—This first reflection out of immediacy is the *self-distinction* of *subject* from *substance*, or the self-doubling and self-externalizing concept: the going into itself and the development of the pure I. To the extent

this differentiation is the pure deed of  $I = I$ , the concept is the necessity and the origin of concrete being (*Dasein*) which has substance as its essence and [so] exists for itself. But this existence of concrete being for itself is the concept established in determinate form. The concept is, accordingly, this very movement *in itself*, this impulse to go down deeper into simple *substance*, which is thereby—in this negativity and in this *movement*—*subject*.<sup>51</sup>

Hegel continues the explanation in this way: Since spirit's real power is to remain self-identical in its self-externalizations and as substance-subject posit its self-referential aspect as but one of its surpassed and preserved moments, the I need not be anxious about holding onto the form of consciousness, nor struggle against the forms of its objectification. It is not the pure paranoia of Sartre's *être-pour-soi*. Nor is it—as Schelling seemed to express himself in some latter texts of the identity philosophy—some third item besides substance and subject that throws all distinctions into the abyss, while it expresses its (abstract) identity in them as an order of mere contingently correlated substances and subjects. Instead, *Wissen* is this seeming inactivity whereby spirit's differentiated or concretized form knows itself and thereby returns to its unity. In *Wissen*, spirit has gone beyond being the movement of its contents; they rest in it now as the overcome differentiae that consciousness developed. Spirit has achieved the pure element, the ether of its existence: the *concept*. By the freedom of its being, these contents themselves are the self-externalizing self or the immediate unity of self-consciousness. Considered from the side of these contents, this movement of self-externalization is the necessitation of these contents. In that state, the differentiated contents subsist relationally, not independently of each other. The element of their existence is the concept's unrest, its self-retaining self-destruction or negativity. In absolute knowing, necessary differentiation is the nature of the self, just as much as free being is. Insofar, then, as spirit has won the status of concept, it articulates its existence and movement in this conceptual ether and is *science*.<sup>52</sup>

We need not quote or paraphrase Hegel any further or more closely. By uniting reason and reflection—as promised in the *Differenzschrift*—Hegel has at least *prima facie* backed up his claim to be

able to unite form and content in a version of identity philosophy that preserves both the absoluteness of the system's principle and the distinctness, articulated difference, and particularity of its contents. But it is doubtful that the concept's movement—toward itself in the *Phenomenology* and out of itself in its own proper conceptual medium in the *Logic* and the rest of the philosophical sciences that make up the system—is, in some meaningful sense of the term, their necessitation or deduction or derivation. It is a significant advance beyond Schelling, that Hegel in 1805–1806 can achieve a life-like, fluid or spiritual system principle, on the one hand, and still preserve the individuality and difference of the system's contents, on the other. That the system has the organic character that Hegel rather unscientifically ascribed to the living being—unanalyzable, irreducible, unformulable fluidity—is one of its wonders, and one of its major difficulties. Even the learned reader must sigh with Galileo and mutter under her breath, when she leaves the place of its judgment, *e pur si muove*.

## NOTES

1. Georg Friedrich Wilhelm Hegel, *Phänomenologie des Geistes*, ed. Wolfgang Bonsiepen and Reinhard Heede, in *Gesammelte Werke*, Bd. 9 (Hamburg: Meiner, 1980), pp. 16–18; hereafter cited as GW9 plus page number. English translation: *Phenomenology of Spirit* (= ET), trans. A. V. Miller (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1977), §§15–17.

2. By 'substantial,' I mean comments made in the body of the *Phenomenology* as opposed to the 'polemical' remarks of its preface.

3. GW9, pp. 422–24; ET, §§788–93.

4. GW9, pp. 422–23; ET, §789.

5. GW9, p. 423; ET, §790.

6. GW9, pp. 423–24; ET, §791.

7. GW9, p. 424; ET, §792.

8. GW9, pp. 424–25; ET, §793.

9. GW9, pp. 430–31; ET, §803.

10. GW9, pp. 431–32; ET, §§804–805.

11. GW9, pp. 100–102; ET, §§163–64.

12. GW9, pp. 154, 156; ET, §§274, 279.

13. GW9, pp. 430–31; ET, §803.

14. GW9, p. 431; ET, §804.

15. There is a noticeable progression in Schelling's early attempts to explain the metaphysics of identity. The 1801 *Presentation of My System* tries to elaborate the structure of its system from repetitions of relatively differenced version of identity—the “potencies” or levels of identity in difference—while the nature of the absolute itself is conveyed in the somewhat puzzling formula “the identity of identity.” The dialogue *Bruno* (1802) uses, perhaps at Hegel's suggestion, the locution “the identity of identity and nonidentity” to denote the absolute, and uses the Platonic-sounding terminology of ‘ideas’ to point out the groupings or levels within the absolute's expression in form. In *Further Presentations from the System of Philosophy* (1802), Schelling speaks of a universal method for philosophy, ‘construction’, or exhibition of a singular item or theme within a full field of like phenomena, or ultimately, within a total world-description. For the purposes of our current discussion, it is important to note that all of these alternatives are static and objectivistic, in contract to the dynamic of subjectivity that Hegel is able to impart to a similar arrangement of materials. Partial translations of the first and third texts can be found in *Philosophical Forum* 32, no. 4 (winter 2001), pp. 339–97.

16. GW9, pp. 82–83; ET, §§132–34.

17. GW9, pp. 83–85; ET, §§135–36.

18. Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, trans. Norman Kemp Smith (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1965), B xviii [= p. 23].

19. GW9, pp. 85–86; ET, §§137–39.

20. GW9, pp. 86–88; ET, §§140–42.

21. GW9, pp. 88–89; ET, §§143–45.

22. GW9, pp. 89–92; ET, §§146–50.

23. GW9, pp. 92–96; ET, §§151–56.

24. GW9, pp. 96–98; §§157–59.

25. GW9, pp. 98–101; ET, §§160–63.

26. GW9, pp. 101–102; ET, §164.

27. GW9, p. 102; ET, §165.

28. See F. W. J. Schelling, *Sämtliche Werke*, ed. K. F. A. Schelling (Stuttgart-Augsburg: Cotta, 1856–1861), Bd. 4, pp. 114–16.

29. *Ibid.*, 361–66.

30. *Ibid.*, 134n.

31. GW9, pp. 137–38; ET, §§240–42.

32. GW9, pp. 139–41; ET, §§244–46.

33. GW9, pp. 140–42; ET, §§246–48.

34. GW9, pp. 142–44; ET, §§249–52.
35. GW9, pp. 144–45; ET, §253.
36. GW9, pp. 145–46; ET, §§254–55.
37. GW9, pp. 146–47; ET, §§257–59.
38. GW9, pp. 148–50; ET, §§260–64.
39. GW9, pp. 150–51; ET, §§265–66.
40. GW9, pp. 150–51; ET, §§265–67.
41. GW9, pp. 150–55; ET, §§266–76.
42. GW9, pp. 155–58; ET, §§277–82.
43. GW9, pp. 159–61; ET, §§285–90.
44. GW9, pp. 164–66; ET, §§293–97.
45. GW9, p. 425; ET, §794.
46. GW9, pp. 425–27; ET, §§794–97.
47. GW9, p. 430; ET, §803.
48. Ibid.
49. GW9, pp. 430–31; ET, §803.
50. GW9, pp. 430–31, translation mine. Compare ET, §803.
51. GW9, p. 431, translation mine. Compare ET, §804.
52. GW9, pp. 431–32; ET, §§804–805.



# THE TRANSITION OF UNDER- STANDING TO SELF- CONSCIOUSNESS

LUDOVICUS DE VOS

**T**he transition between the chapters Understanding and Self-Consciousness seems to be one of the most intricate in the whole of Hegel's *Phenomenology*.<sup>1</sup> Its point is the definitive critique and rejection of so-called 'realistic philosophy of knowledge', not by external means, but internally.<sup>2</sup> Understanding's every attempt to develop a concept of an object—a process that leads to the reduction of understanding to a passive receptive power or faculty (*Vermögen*)—definitely fails. The main questions of the chapter, however, are how this transition comes about, and whether it is strictly 'deduced'. To elucidate these problems, I will first give a short overview of the shape of consciousness that is understanding, then I will offer reflections on different aspects of the transition itself, and finally I will give a brief interpretation of the result of this transition, which appears in the introduction to the chapter on self-consciousness. To elucidate

the structure of Hegel's argument, I will try to stay as close as possible to the text of this transition. I assume that one of the *Phenomenology's* main goals is to provide at least an introduction to a (possible) speculative philosophy, that is, the development of speculative categories.<sup>3</sup> I presuppose that the best version of this logic is found in Hegel's *Logic* of 1805–1806, the main stages of which are: being that becomes other relation, life and cognition, knowing knowledge, spirit, spirit's self-knowing.<sup>4</sup> Hegel's logical aim in the Understanding chapter, then, is to introduce and illustrate the category of 'Relation', and that of the Self-Consciousness chapter is to consciously present 'Life and Cognition'. This is the final or highest goal of the transition that we are studying.

This transition, however, does not presuppose the idea of a 'speculative transition'. It is not possible to use such a notion to clarify the argument of the *Phenomenology*, even if it makes clear what Hegel's ultimate intention is.<sup>5</sup> My chapter is not concerned with the problem of these interconnections but with just this one phenomenological transition.

## I. UNDERSTANDING

The *Phenomenology's* topic is not a defense of different kinds of knowledge but the search for a definitive or sufficient philosophical principle. This is the reason why Hegel distinguishes two kinds of consciousness: there is the unreflected 'natural consciousness', with individual, theoretical, or practical, and also social or religious forms—all of which have their own normal life, light, and possibility. And then there is this consciousness taken as phenomenon by the *Science of the Experience of Consciousness*. In the *Phenomenology*, different forms of 'natural' consciousness are considered as possible principles of philosophy.

Hegel's *Phenomenology* is a presentation of phenomenal knowing.<sup>6</sup> This means that in each section it presents a different form of 'natural' consciousness as phenomenal knowing, or, in other words, that the self-evident forms of natural consciousness—each of

which presupposes its own validity—are considered as possible forms for expressing the real philosophical principle. In each instance, natural consciousness must experience an internal inconsistency, although it will reassert itself in its immediacy. Its self-experience, however, is more radical: natural consciousness as appearing knowing posits itself as the principle of a singular philosophy, and when it posits itself as the philosophical principle, it experiences a radical deficiency. The self-experience of the deficiency of that form of consciousness is at the same time a critical presentation of the principle that has been logically deduced, for it is only as a logical structure that natural consciousness, in its attempt to posit itself as a self-sufficient principle of philosophy, can be criticized as phenomenon. Each attempt of natural consciousness is itself taken as one philosophical principle; these principles, and only these, are then ordered and taken together by us. This ordering of possible principles is made possible only through determinate negation. But every ‘shape’ of consciousness, taken as phenomenal knowing, is at the beginning of its presentation also an exposition of the specificity of that form of natural consciousness.

This pattern holds true of the Understanding chapter. Here we find an ‘understanding consciousness’ that presents itself. This presentation does not limit itself to the immediacy of its natural self-conception; it also expresses itself as the philosophical principle. When it is seen to fail as the philosophical principle, understanding is not destroyed as the tool of ordinary life or scientific method but only in its self-affirmation as a sufficient philosophical method.<sup>7</sup>

Understanding’s topic is consciousness considered in relation to thought, or as a universal that is the true object of consciousness and that resolves problems of perception. But the consciousness involved here does not understand itself as the universal or the concept of the true. The universal is realized merely passively in the understanding as the result of perception; the concept of the object realizes itself while consciousness merely ‘observes’.

The second moment of understanding is explanation. This explanation is understanding’s own movement: it expresses a law that it presents as different from force while it yet maintains that force is the

essence of the law. 'Explanation', therefore, offers a tautological, repetitious explanation. Within this doubled explanation, any change on the side of appearance (forces) is also a change on the side of the supersensible (law). With this doubling, understanding itself undergoes a change, a change different from the summation of the different changes among forces or laws. For unreflective understanding, there arise two worlds, one the inversion of the other; this is a perturbation of thought in that two actual or real things are represented in place of the sole item given in perception. In this perturbation of thought, a problem arises for understanding itself and a transition is initiated.

## 2. THE TRANSITION

Our transition occurs in the chapter Force and Understanding.<sup>8</sup> There is a double starting point: either the understanding takes itself in its natural form and returns to its previous moment, perception, or there is a second moment and a different result. In the first case, understanding asks for and desires a better perception than it currently has. It takes for granted that both its present object and its concept of a different, determining entity are real, and that this duplicity is the true concept of the independence of this object. So it remains natural consciousness functioning as scientific method and cannot be considered a valid philosophical position. In this first case, then, there is no transition at all.

In the second case, the result of understanding is a concept, notion, or category which is neither a concept of the understanding nor commensurate with it. The realistic moment signified by perception is hereby destroyed as a supposedly self-sufficient principle in philosophy, for the principle or category derived is a nonbeing, a counter-being (*Entgegengesetztes*). This reversal and rejection is elaborated in the phenomenological movement. How does the transition come about? Its structure can be articulated in the steps described in the paragraphs that make up the transition:<sup>9</sup>

1. §160. The first step articulates the view that what cannot be understood, the distinct in itself, and what limits the reach of the understanding, is the infinite (A).
2. §161. The second step is the result of the first—for us. We conclude that the shape of consciousness involved in understanding's appearance, i.e., understanding as phenomenon, is not the natural shape of understanding. Hegel alludes to elaborations of this pattern in logic and natural philosophy (B).<sup>10</sup>
3. §§162 and 163. §162 tries to locate an object that is understandable, and that determines its specific kind of consciousness as its object. Life is one such possible visible (perceptible and understandable) object (C). Hereafter, it receives a twofold articulation: §163 shows how such a life is merely the principle of determination for all previous shapes in which activity appeared (D).
4. §164. Here, this life is shown to be an indication of understanding's failure. Also shown is how this consciousness of life can subsist in science itself as the pure concept (E).
5. §165. This step uses constitutive negation: the result of consciousness of life becomes presentable for itself, i.e., as a phenomenon of spirit. With this constitutive negation, we attain not merely a play of forces translated into universal moments (as in life), but consciousness as consciousness, that is, self-consciousness (F).

I have outlined the text and the stages of its argument; now I work through the stages step by step.

### **Step A. §160**

As far as understanding itself is concerned, return to an improved understanding is always possible; it can remain in its own right as natural or 'normal' understanding. This may be significant for ordinary life and for scientific understanding, but when understanding posits itself as a philosophical principle, it fails. An 'understanding' that must revert to the previous stage of perception is not an authentic

philosophical possibility, for the coherence of perception was itself secured only by the upward move to understanding.

Another result, therefore, of the movement of understanding must be considered: the inverted world. The inverted world must be understood not only as a result of understanding's activity, it must also be thought. Understanding as a shape of consciousness thus becomes one phenomenon in the appearing science of philosophy. We move from the representation of the interchange of the two worlds to the thought of this inversion. For to conclude philosophically to the impossibility of understanding as a last or definitive stage, this unstable and contradictory result must be taken in its pure form, and just such pure consideration is the activity of the understanding. This pure result, the thinking of inversion, is change without the substrates of change, the distinction of contradictory positions.

Understanding explains the given world—primary being and the perceptual qualities that determine passive consciousness—by conceiving or representing an other, inverted world. But in doing so, understanding comes to an end. All that it can consider is an abstract presentation of pure change, e.g., from north to south, good to bad, or possible to impossible, as in the other-world modalities envisioned by contemporary systems of logic.

But what is really understood and purely conceived in this move, made without the help of perception, is the opposition of the factors. In this conceptual understanding, the opposites are one and the same concept that holds both moments in itself. Only at this stage is the difference between the two presented in its very self, not merely represented. Such a difference, however, is a thought, not a being. It is a thought, an (active) determination, not a (passive) being-determined. So it is a nonbeing that has its contrary in itself, and this as a unity. Where thought could locate the difference on one side or the other, this replacement or re-presentation would no longer be possible. Only in this way does thinking attain the status of nonbeing: the concept itself is not built out of active being, as opposed to the passive consciousness found in sensation, perception or understanding; the concept in its purity is developed out of the understanding's very activity.

This difference, as thought, is the infinite: the sublation of the change of different differences. Why is it called 'infinite'? Insofar as the opposed factors are contradictory, the concept of these differences has no being in itself and is empty—void of homogeneous qualities, of entities, and of opposed determinations of such entities. This concept, therefore, indicates pure transition.

This infinite is not a metaphysical or religious entity, but only a specific thought. It is the absolute sublation of determinacy; that is, it is nothing, but nothing in such a way that the determinacies that gave rise to it had a function that is now surpassed. Or it is a simple relation, the ground of the parts of the opposition. It remains the unity of the two relata, the two worlds. As the unity of the relata, it is their unifying function, so that the two forms of that relation are really unified. It is the ground of these relata, and it is simple, since the unifying function can be understood through it alone. The conditions for unity emerge from the elements of the relation themselves, but the unifying act of the relating, if it occurs, comes from itself.

The problem of the infinite or pure transition is so complicated here because it arises from structural problems in the development of Hegel's logic. In a version of the *Logic* from 1804–1805, Hegel treats infinity as the fourth part of relation or simple proportion, but in the 1805–1806 version, there is a new structure. In the *Phenomenology*, however, we can find no substantial relation among the different topics. Perhaps 'Relation' here has incorporated subsistence or substance, force as causality, and the play between original and inverse worlds as reciprocity, so that the chapter could be viewed as an illustration of the proportional relation of being.

In differentiating the concept of infinity from the development that concept receives in empirical science, Hegel makes visible the multilevel structure of his introduction to speculative Science. First, there is a form of natural consciousness; second, a principle of philosophy is discerned within that natural figure; and third, that principle is seen to be capable of a purely logical presentation, apart from the figure of consciousness in which it initially appears.

### Step B. §161

If the result of this movement in understanding were merely a return to a better perception, the essential and inner determination of understanding would be lost. With infinity, in contrast, all the moments of understanding are maintained and completed within the specific inner form of understanding. But this completion is at the same time the necessary determination of that shape of consciousness, completion, as a phenomenon in philosophy. This means that the form of completion is also an understandable form of understanding. Hegel shows this from different sides.

The concept that understanding evolves, if it must have a result, has to be a completion. The infinite, therefore, must be the completion of the law of necessity that was the goal of understanding's search, for, if it is not, the concept of the infinite would be something quite strange and unrelated to understanding's very project.

How is the infinite this completion? Hegel shows the completeness of infinity in three phases. First, it is self-identical in its opposite. Only in doubling its domains of discourse could understanding explain how appearances function; the simple is explanatory only when split in two. Second, the parts of the law that understanding specifies are real and self-subsistent parts which cannot further be explained; so, for instance, space and time are independent and without internal connection in the laws of mechanics. Third, when understanding reaches the concept of the law of necessity as 'the infinite', the parts becomes specified relative to one another within the unity of the concept, so that the parts are fully specified at the same time that the unity is fully determined. Only in this case can understanding claim to know the real unity of our world of appearances and the inverse world of law, the unity between appearances and the in-itself, since the opposed forms of difference are specifications of the one conceptual unity. This means that in this case, what is different is a difference in itself that specifies its other and in so doing is but one unity.



### Step C. §162

Understanding has a name for a unity like this: 'life'. Just such a unity is 'given' in life, but life is also the changed object of the understanding, which emerges when it seeks its result in its purity. This simple, resultant infinity is life in its simple essence. In higher orders of living beings, life is the movement of producing elements which (1) are specified and differentiated relative to one another, and (2) specify life not singly, but only all together in their mutual exclusion. Hegel explains this more technically in the case of self-identity.

Infinity is in itself the endeavor to subsist in a difference of moments such that there are no differences, and where, accordingly, this difference is only in itself. On the one hand, viewed from the side of difference, the infinity of life subsists only in relation to one of the two distinguished moments. In such a situation, an individual life form is only one individual and can be related to its own essence just in case it is possible to be related to another individual: no man without a woman, nor woman without a man, defines human life. So either the infinite (life) or both its parts are the unity here, not just what is specified in the contrary individual or specimen. The unity is also this very contrariety. On the other hand, a single specimen is never the (genuine) individualization of the infinite, but is an abstraction, namely, it is only individualized as an abstraction from the other individual. So even the infinite—on the level of understanding, the infinity of life—is a negative concept, one that distinguishes itself from its equally necessary elements and hence remains an abstraction apart from these individuals.<sup>11</sup>

Hegel shows here how something is possible only by existing in one or another limited form; this is its intrinsic necessity. For (higher) life is possible only if it has individualized itself in one or both mutually exclusive forms; and only both together comprise the sufficient condition for life itself. Only in this way can a natural shape or figure of what is the final structure of understanding, grasped in its purity, subsist or appear. What does not exist in this way, in the infinitude of life, is but an abstraction therefrom, insofar as it is never individualized in and from its own concept. Life is the totality of contradictory

aspects or functions, and in its totalizing function, life (and the infinite as well) signifies the boundary of everything that has specific being or limits.

### Step D. §163

The infinite discussed thus far is really an in-finity. It is not a finite; it is a contradictory concept that cannot be reduced to its previous moments or elements. Here, in this transition, it is taken as free and subsisting for itself. This means that it is either (a) nothing, not some finite being or quality, or (b) some nonfinite being or situation. The first signifies something that does arise for consciousness, but which cannot be posited;<sup>12</sup> the second is what is viewed not on the level of the 'natural' forms of consciousness, but in a science of the experience of consciousness. This infinity is also the resultant structure of 'soul', the principle or impulse of the movement of thought viewed in previous stages. After the destructive result that is the elaboration of its life or movement, there can be no other solution for the understanding than to think purely. Here Hegel spells out the precise transition to self-consciousness.

If life is the speculative result of our consideration of understanding, then even understanding has changed its 'standpoint'. If life is the real result of understanding, then it can be viewed in hindsight as the 'soul', the moving principle of the development of being, essence, and (the law of) force. But it is only in the perspective of explanation that the 'soul' of those explanations linking sense-certainty, perception, and understanding appears. As explanation (or active understanding), this infinite transforms consciousness into self-consciousness, which then appears for the understanding as another appearance. Hegel explicates this movement in a four-part recapitulation of the whole chapter:

1. In the explanation of phenomena, we must locate a difference between the factors—between force and law—that is no difference. In this situation of explanation, we also find described (in its concept) what self-consciousness is.

2. Inside explanation, differences recur and reappear, but the necessity of this movement of differences does not itself become understanding's object, insofar as understanding only describes and is passively involved in that movement. Unbeknownst to the understanding, however, is the fact that in its description, understanding is busy with itself and *only* with itself. Empirical scientific explanation is also (forgotten) self-knowledge and/or culture-shaping activity.

### Step E. §164

3. In the attempt to differentiate the apparent and the inverted world, understanding's object is the infinite, but it falls short of its intention and the infinite appears divided into two worlds. In this self-involved scission, the pure concept *appears* in its purity and truth; it will be *thought* through in speculative science.

At this point, however, the concept's appearance provides a new shape or figure of consciousness. Natural consciousness in its immediate reproduction acquires a new form over against life. Rather than seeing its own essence in the concept (or in the play) of the infinite, it sees in life another object. Whenever it arrives at a new concept, understanding tries to find an 'object' corresponding to it, which then seems to put the understanding in a new external relationship. In so doing, understanding fails to consider that the concept—intrinsically destructive of objectivity—is its essence. Instead it adopts as its object the most complicated sort of object, life, one that is destructive of other objectivity. The concept, therefore, is grasped neither as concept nor as a new object in a new relationship to understanding. But in truth the immediate object that is destructive of objectivity or immediacy, namely life, is not an immediate object, since it arises only by thinking through the concept of the infinite in its purity.

What this means is explained in the second part of this transition.

4. The new shape or figure of consciousness that results, for which an object can never be given which is fully what that consciousness is, is self-consciousness. Self-consciousness is the distinct shape of indistinctness: I am I for the I. In this self-consciousness, not only is it the case that every consciousness of an object, of something other, is necessarily self-consciousness—so that consciousness is possible only for self-consciousness—but self-consciousness, being solely for itself, is the single object of this shape of consciousness. But, Hegel remarks, this being solely for itself is not yet the truth; it is displayed here only as one specific mark of self-consciousness, not its full definition.

### Step F. §165

What is the result of consciousness? In the movement of understanding, self-consciousness has experienced itself only in its act of explaining otherness. So this experience or discovery is the condition for self-consciousness; or, better, this self-experience is itself a (reliable) concept of self-consciousness. What is the upshot? Let us look back: the transition between understanding and self-consciousness started with the moment of contradiction or infinity, but now it appears that we can explain the infinite only as self-consciousness.

The simple infinite is the absolute concept. Life is either man or woman, and neither man nor woman. If life specifies itself, it defines itself as man and then not as woman, or as woman and then not as man. Understanding, therefore, has a natural version or empirical illustration of the concept as such, which can never be explained as anything but self-relating activity. Life cannot be defined without invoking elements or functions that exclude one another. It is not reducible to these elements; this irreducible exclusion is its own (natural) definition. As thus described, it is its own (lived) nothingness or absence of simple 'passive' being; the result of its intrinsic contradiction is none of its elements, a 'none' of being. The universality of life is present only if an abstract universality contradicts an equally abstract determination, but as natural phenomenon, there is no natural singu-

larity that includes both. No living being is the singularity of life itself. It is this very problem of singularization and its necessary moments that will be the topic of the introduction to Self-Consciousness.

In this way, natural understanding passes over into self-consciousness. Our contribution here is the constitutive or determinate negation. This contribution is not a speculative assumption; it is only the presentation of a natural figure of consciousness and of its end as a shape of the *Phenomenology of Spirit*. But these additional remarks must qualify our relation to these forms of consciousness: First, we say that this figure is finished or exhausted, even though for that shape of consciousness itself a return to a previous figure is still possible—if that shape posits itself as the sole truth. Second, the figure can function for us as a pure concept, something in itself, and we can use it to step up to the level of Science, which can exhibit the pure determination in itself; the determination then would have no phenomenological significance. Third, a new shape arises for our consciousness and is viewed by consciousness as something other. Fourth, we have a complex but unelaborated view of self-consciousness as a plurality of self-consciousnesses—but how is a systematic explanation of this plurality possible?

### **3. SELF-CONSCIOUSNESS: A NEW STARTING-POINT?**

The transition to a new standpoint can be made reliably only if the 'new' figure of consciousness is irreducible to previous ones. This can be maintained only if there is a satisfactory concept of self-consciousness on the ground. The new standpoint of this chapter, then, has to guarantee several things: (1) a truly new form of natural consciousness must be at hand which can become a new object for the phenomenology of spirit; (2) its status as a truly new form of consciousness can be guaranteed only if the principle of philosophy invoked at this new level is irreducible to ones expressed in previous levels. Whether or not this is the case can be displayed only in the science of the experience of consciousness; it is not itself a direct experience of consciousness; (3) to be

really secure, the new figure of consciousness, functioning as the principle of philosophy, must reconfigure its previous determinations so as to show that they are not adequate as philosophical principles. This is also the program that Hegel set forth in the new chapter's introduction.

Life is a necessary but not sufficient condition for consciousness. Like life, self-consciousness is internally differentiated, but unlike life, self-consciousness stands related to itself as to a genus, not as individual to genus, as is the case with a simple concept. Self-consciousness is for self-consciousness. Hegel expresses the difference between life and self-consciousness as the difference between a simple genus and a genus that takes itself as genus. The attempt to determine this 'taking as' is the starting-point of Self-Consciousness. It necessitates a moment of individualization in consciousness that is also for itself the genus, namely, thinking. Experience will, therefore, try to interpret self-consciousness as the dissolution of life, but it can only distinguish the moments, not disintegrate them, since the moments of life must remain integrated in the concept of self-consciousness.

From this basis, the further experience of a living self-consciousness will be developed, but this is attained only with immediate *spirit*. Self-Consciousness, with its description or positing of 'natural' self-consciousness, is but the starting-point for the elaboration of the experience of what self-consciousness could mean.

The basic structure of Hegel's defense of the irreducibility of self-consciousness is given in five steps:

- A. Self-consciousness is the solution to the problems that arose in consciousness (§166).
- B. A definition of self-consciousness is offered (§167).
- C. The negative object for self-consciousness, and its counterpart, is life (§§168–70).
- D. Life and self-consciousness are so related that while life is necessary for self-consciousness, the latter is irreducible to the former (§§171–74).
- E. The real concept of self-consciousness is the mutual recognition of plural self-consciousnesses, or it is the concept of spirit (§§175–77).

### A. The Truth of Self-Certainty (§166)

Self-consciousness is the solution for the problems of consciousness. It is the new truth or the concept of an actively determining objective truth, which implies that truth as something given is a vanishing entity. Truth exists for consciousness only as self-consciousness. The concept of the object that understanding entertained was not the real object. The truth provided the concept by the object is not the initial certainty of self-consciousness.

In self-consciousness, consciousness itself, not an outside object, is the object of consciousness, or truth is identical with certainty. Object corresponds to concept, and consciousness as self-consciousness is the truth. Within this equality there remains a distinction, but one that is indistinct.

To rephrase this in terms of the chapter's introduction: if the concept is the movement of knowing and the object of knowing is the I, then the object is the concept—or in other words, it is given in self-consciousness—and is itself true. Or, if the concept is what the object is in itself and the object is object in its being known, then both are identical as far as self-consciousness is concerned. The 'in itself' is consciousness, since being for itself is consciousness and, for it, the in-itself and the for-itself are identical. In Fichte's vocabulary,  $I = I$  for the I.

### B. Self-Consciousness (§167)

Self-consciousness is now the true topic, but the moments of consciousness, including the relation of the object to consciousness, are preserved. Self-consciousness is also consciousness for consciousness, not fully identical, but identical nonetheless, since difference is sublated. This unity, however, is not a bare tautology; self-consciousness is also specifically movement or the initiating of activity.

With self-consciousness, the realm of truth coincides with the standard demanded in the introduction. But how does this shape of consciousness appear? How can this relation of consciousness and object be self-consciousness? Knowledge of itself is knowledge, and in this sense also knowledge of otherness. This knowledge is sublated

inasmuch as self-consciousness is the (true) result of conscious knowing. To guarantee this result, self-consciousness must now deduce from itself the determinations of consciousness and generate an authentic concept of self-consciousness. Self-consciousness must reconstruct or reproduce the result of consciousness that is its very starting point on its *own* level. If this reproduction were not possible, self-consciousness would be only a new figure of consciousness and not really a new moment of spirit.

The determinations of consciousness, therefore, are seen to be abstractions and empty distinctions. The main stance of consciousness, namely, the subsistence of an object for consciousness, seems to be forgotten in this specification of self-consciousness. But self-consciousness is the result of immediate consciousness's return from otherness. Self-consciousness is movement or activity, a practical phenomenon; it is not the objective view of me, but the positing of my own identity. Insofar as it would be only  $I = I$ , there could be no movement in it. Without movement, such consciousness could function as understanding, but lacking a ground for distinguishing itself from its objects, it would exist as mute rest, not as self-consciousness.

A double object for self-consciousness emerges from this specification: otherness, or being distinguished from consciousness, and the unity of itself with the being so distinguished. In the first relation, self-consciousness remains as (theoretical) consciousness; in the second, it is that very unity, so that the object of consciousness has no independent being but is only appearance. This second movement has the unity of self-consciousness as its specific essence, because self-consciousness is desire. Self-consciousness must not just state that it is the only true or valid shape of consciousness. It must prove it; it must show that its essence is essential. But, in that case, self-consciousness must have a double object, one negatively related to self-consciousness and another that is true by virtue of its opposition to the first.

### C. Life (§§168–70)

1. §168. Even if the first, negative object is not a simple object of consciousness like sense impressions or perceptions of mountains,



in the transition it is turned in upon itself so that it is life, the outer or internal object as reflected by the workings of the concept.

As an entity, then, the object of self-consciousness is an object of self-conscious desire; it is a living being or individual, for the universal result of consciousness is the unity of different distinctions. This universal unity is the concept, which dissolves itself in the opposition of self-consciousness and life. The opposition within the concept consists in the following: the concept's universality is for self-consciousness itself but not for life, for life is movement of a living being relative to another living being but neither one nor the other, man nor woman, is in itself the universality of life. Life is only this universal movement of itself to itself as distinct. It is a movement of the necessarily individualized life form, that which is not for itself or its own specific difference (being male or female), and so misses the universality of life itself.

Only for the I is  $I = I$  or, to say the same, this universality is attained by the empty, but actual, I.

In life's not being for the I, there is a factor of brute subsistence: consciousness (of self-consciousness) is given as soon as its object is. What must be shown, then, is how desire or essential self-consciousness experiences this subsistence of its (negative) object.

2. §169. In the case of self-consciousness, the following features are necessary elements of the concept of life: The concept expresses the movement of the infinite, developing itself as time and space. Specifically life is the genus that both develops and annihilates subsistent moments of the individual or individual moments of its own individualization. This annihilating individualization is the substance of life's members. As such, this substantial internal movement of life is the (self-conscious) determination of being over against the consciousness of self-consciousness. And the distinction of the members among and against each other is precisely what defines being as a moment of life.
3. §170. The subsistence of the moments of life is a being that subsists for itself, but as returned to immediate unity. The unity of life is

negative, or annihilating, and each member subsists only through the universal subsistence, not for itself as a member. Members of a genus or of an individual organism have a specified way of existing relative to other members, and in this way they further the progression of life's movement. Their own existence, however, is the annihilation of their being for themselves; for the individual the real expression of life is death.

#### D. Self-Consciousness and Life (§§171–74)

1. §171. The importance of life lies in its individuation. Life's specific contribution to the progress of Hegel's argument is the necessary structure it provides for individuation: Life seems to continue itself by consuming its members; thus it is the power of universality. Life also elaborates itself in differences, some of which subsist independently, as man or woman within humankind, for instance, and some as differential aspects posed against the universality of life, as in the organism's absorption of inorganic matter. Life is, therefore, a differentiation of differences, and since it is differentiated from itself in these differences, it is a living being on its own.

This inversion, however, inverts itself. Not only does the living being subsist, it gives itself its unifying, universalizing dissolution; the sublation of the individual is also its genesis. The essence of the living individual is life itself, but the individual posits in itself the differentiation of life, and then posits its position as individuality. If every human being was simply a 'Schopenhauerian' as a character of its life, without the added determination of being male or being female, life itself would be at an end. In this way the simple substance of the living essence is active in the individual. Only this activity unites and integrates the passive processes of life and the active process of the living individual. In this selfsame process, the passive processes are but the abstract living essence, while actuality is provided by the individual life form. So life is in its actuality an evolution of moments and the resumption of these evolved moments into one totality, all this conserved in its simplicity.

2. §172. Here the difference between the two objects of self-consciousness stated in §167 is worked out. Without the process of life, self-consciousness is not possible or actual. That process taken as the negative object of self-consciousness differs from the real conservation of life, which is a reflected process. The first process in life is the engendering of living beings, which occurs only on the side of being since the process does not conserve itself in the self-conscious element. The second, reflected, process contains all the elements of the process in its own universality, insofar as the moments are sublated: the I = I for the I. This unity of self-consciousness may be empty, perhaps, but it contains all the different logical functions. At this point, the self-conscious individual claims itself as the singularized universal. The universal is the simple genus that appears for itself as this genus. In particularized form, where living beings appear from other living beings, there is plurality of life forms but no singularity. In this case, the living being is not for itself (the universality of) life, since it does not sublimate the moment of universality in death, its own death. For itself, life is not just a simple genus; that is but one of its specifications. But as individualized living being, life points to self-consciousness. Only self-consciousness is capable of holding the moments of life together as genus, articulating itself as a simple genus, while differentiating itself in its life process.
3. §173. From this point, the full concept of self-consciousness can be developed. To this end, all the moments of life, which on that level were but simple moments, must be developed as moments of self-consciousness. These are now aspects of a concept that, it can be argued, is a new shape of consciousness. After providing a defense of its claim to complete novelty, this new shape must demonstrate for itself that the moments of its concept are also elements of its lived experience. And out of the reflected context of life—particularized into two individuals—it can be stated that there are at least two self-consciousnesses that have to display their moments in the double form of proof and experience, even if they seem essentially the same.

4. §174. The rest of the introduction to this chapter is only conceptual development, so that the test of the new position, which continues in Reason and Spirit, will be a complicated one. With self-consciousness, we have reached forms of principled knowledge such as, for example, idealistic principles of philosophy. So we now move on to a truly speculative concept, and it, in turn, provides the phenomenal version of the logical movement of life/knowledge, or cognition. The I as genus is the negative essence of its subsisting moments, so it becomes certain of itself only as the suppression of those same moments in the other life juxtaposed to it. Suppression or annihilation was the end of life; here the process is 'sublation'. In this suppressive function, self-consciousness is desire. What was immediately involved in the subjective side or cognitive structure of self-consciousness is now repeated on the 'objective' side. Inasmuch as it is for itself its own genus, self-consciousness posits this certainty of suppression/sublation. It annihilates the object and posits this genus as true, that is, as exemplified; this proof is carried on in or upon this object. So subjective certainty here attains 'objectivity'.

#### E. The Definitive, Internally Coherent Concept of Self-Consciousness (§§175–77)

1. §175. In the satisfaction of desire, the self-consciousness experiences the subsistence of the other object, for satisfaction is attainable only if there is an object. For this sort of satisfaction to occur, the annihilation of the other object is necessary, but in its annihilation a new object must be produced (as in the process of life). Desire and satisfaction are thus the genesis of a new desire. Also, to the extent that such a satisfaction is impossible, it is impossible for desire to be the essence of self-consciousness. Self-consciousness is absolutely for itself and this is possible only through desire; it must produce this satisfaction, for without it, self-consciousness lacks all truth.

There can be but one resolution of this complicated situation. Only if the object of desire and satisfaction is itself also a negating activity, is it possible for the first negation to sustain its negating

activity. Life as such is not enough for the negating activity required, since the negative activity would be the genus itself. But life acting negatively as genus is self-consciousness. Self-consciousness, therefore, can only attain its satisfaction in another self-consciousness.

2. §176. With these moments of the concept (or elements of possible experience) aggregated, the concept of self-consciousness is complete, as is the proof of a sufficient basis to guarantee the novelty of this new level. What are these features of self-consciousness? These are the simple genus (of §173), the negative species under this genus, desire, posed over against the positive, immediate species of life (of §§174 and 175, in part), and the negative reproduction of the genus over against the other negative genus—both of which provide the sufficient singularization of the genus ‘self-consciousness’ and which produce satisfaction for both. To say the same, the first feature is the pure I; the second is desire and the impossibility of a definite satisfaction or a pure certainty; the third, the truth of self-consciousness, is doubly differentiated self-consciousness. So self-consciousness has an object that is independent, but independent only in the annihilation of its distinctness. It is not sufficient that this object be merely a living thing, for the annihilation of distinctness in this case is only death. Self-consciousness’s object, therefore, must also be a living self-consciousness.
3. §177. This fifth step provides the concept of self-consciousness, the moments of which are pre-given conceptually, but which still have to be experienced. Conceptually, we know that self-consciousness can exist only for self-consciousness, but this must be established ‘in fact’, not just in concept. Only in this way can self-consciousness become the unity of itself in its distinction from itself. How is this so? As self-conscious, I am not the object; as the agent of desire and satisfaction, I see to it that the object of desire no longer subsists; the result is that only if self-consciousness is itself its own object will it be at the same time both I (not object)

and object (a subsisting object, not I myself). In this way is developed (by us) not just the concept of immediate self-consciousness, but the concept of spirit as well. With the ushering in of spirit, the *Phenomenology's* program changes, and spirit becomes the subject of development; in conscience, for instance, self-consciousness possesses only the beginnings of the unity for which it is in search.

The proof of these further stages is to be their being experienced by self-consciousness, that is, by the kind of consciousness or knowing that is now aware that it is at least a self-consciousness. We could put the point in this way, to paraphrase the first proposition of Sense-Certainty: the knowing from which we now start is self-consciousness, and henceforth we have to produce our own determinations of it so that they exist on the level of self-conscious activity.

#### 4. A DEFINITIVE RESULT?

Understanding, which can be read as providing the basis of a realistic ontology, has gone over into self-consciousness, which supplies the basic element of another kind of philosophy. But at first glance the basic concept of a new 'transcendental' (anti-realistic) philosophy is not consistent. The initial concept of self-consciousness—as a pure, simple I—cannot serve as the next category of philosophy if it is inconsistent. Pure, simple (solipsistic) self-consciousness is not thinkable as such. Only if it is removed from Cartesian assumptions (independence from life) and from Kantian ones (lacking a fully embedded social context) is self-consciousness thinkable. Self-consciousness is thinkable only as spirit, that is, only if it is a social (or living, self-differentiated) self-consciousness.

Hegel's main argument for this refusal of every kind of individualism or social atomism is given in the transition itself, the attainment of the infinite in and for itself. It is there that the link between the individualization of the infinite genus of life and the radicalized process of singularization that is self-conscious spirit is proved.

## NOTES

1. Cf. R. Pippin, *Hegel's Idealism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), p. 138; T. Pinkard, *Hegel's Phenomenology* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), p. 42.

2. K. R. Westphal, *Hegel, Hume, und die Identität wahrnehmbarer Dinge* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp Verlag, 1998).

3. H. F. Fulda, *Das Problem einer Einleitung in Hegels Wissenschaft der Logik* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp Verlag, 1965).

4. Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, *Schriften und Entwürfe*, ed. Rolf-Peter Horstmann and Johann Heinrich Trede, in *Gesammelte Werke* Bd. 8 (Hamburg: Felix Meiner, 1968), p. 286. See also Otto Pöggeler, *Hegels Idee einer Phänomenologie des Geistes* (Freiburg and Munich: Alber, 1973), pp. 231 ff.

5. Hegel does not do epistemology and does not offer a defense of the realistic position of natural consciousness. He simply provides a Hegelian approach.

6. I am indebted for this approach to U. Claesges, *Darstellung des erscheinenden Wissens* (Bonn: Bouvier Verlag, 1974).

7. See Th. Kalenberg, *Die Befreiung der Natur* (Hamburg: Felix Meiner, 1997), pp. 12–45.

8. Georg Friedrich Wilhelm Hegel, *Phänomenologie des Geistes*, ed. Wolfgang Bonsiepen and Reinhard Heede, in *Gesammelte Werke* Bd. 9 (Hamburg: Felix Meiner, 1980), pp. 98–102; cited hereafter as GW9. English translation: *Phenomenology of Spirit*, trans. A. V. Miller (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977), §§160–65; cited hereafter as ET.

9. See also R. Pippin, “You Can’t Get There from Here,” in *The Cambridge Companion to Hegel* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), pp. 52–85, especially pp. 63–71.

10. From this the reader can surmise how Hegel used the *Phenomenology* as a course book when lecturing on the system as a whole.

11. In this consideration of life, Hegel answers questions posed by Schelling and Jacobi (GW9, p. 100; ET, §162).

12. GW9, 101; ET, p. 101.





# THE LOGICAL STRUCTURE OF SELF- CONSCIOUSNESS

PAUL G. COBBEN

**T**his chapter is about the logical structure of self-consciousness. I have two important reasons for choosing this subject. The first is an internal Hegelian one. In my opinion, well-known Hegel researchers have failed in their interpretation of self-consciousness's logical structure.<sup>1</sup> I will show that the categories of relationship have a central place here. My second consideration is more external. The logical analysis of self-consciousness is a good starting point for explaining one of the central issues in Hegel's thinking, especially for those who are less involved in this kind of philosophical approach. The concept of self-consciousness is Hegel's answer to the mind-body problem. It makes clear that Hegel's dialectics attempts to overcome the contradiction between mind and body.

Since the logic discussed here is *dialectical logic*, a proper exposition of the subject requires insight into the general relationship

between the *Phenomenology of Spirit*, in which 'self-consciousness' is developed, and Hegel's mature philosophical system, in which dialectical logic is explicitly introduced. To this end, I will first give a sketch of the project of the *Phenomenology*.

The *Phenomenology of Spirit* is centered on the question whether the reality that is given through the senses can be acknowledged as substantial reality. The first part of the work (including the chapters on consciousness, self-consciousness, and reason) presents the systematic development of structural conditions that make such substantial knowledge possible. Hegel concludes that only ethical substance, meaning a free society in which persons realize their freedom, can be acknowledged as substantial reality. In the second part (the chapter called Spirit), Hegel points out that European history can be interpreted as a process in which the formal conditions of free society are realized step by step. In the third and final part, Absolute Knowledge, Hegel makes clear that the reality of free society presupposes an absolute being. No specific historical society can be known to be a substantial reality. It is only the total process of world history that reveals the existence of substantial reality, namely, the absolute reality of *absolute Spirit*, the absolute being that manifests itself in the process of world history.

In the first chapter of the *Phenomenology*, it is *consciousness* that strives to absolute (substantial) knowledge. In the beginning, consciousness is conceptualized as a *tabula rasa*, that is, as pure openness to reality. Consciousness has no structure of its own; it is only defined insofar as it knows a definite content. As the development goes on, consciousness appears to be more and more structured. At the end of the chapter Reason, the structures of consciousness are seen to be identical to the structures of the ethical substance: consciousness knows reality as a substantial reality because it has objectified its own structures into an ethical substance. This does not mean, however, that consciousness has a substantiality of its own alongside ethical substance. Consciousness has no structures *without* this objectification. Consciousness has developed itself into *Spirit*, i.e., into the consciousness that knows that it has always already (*immer schon*) objectified itself.

The structures of ethical substance could be interpreted as categorical structures in a Kantian sense. Ethical consciousness is able to judge reality; all true judgments must necessarily correspond to the structures of the ethical substance. Without those structures, there would be neither an objective reality corresponding to a judgment, nor an ethical consciousness that would be able to judge. Yet these structures cannot be considered to be the structure of reality in itself since the ethical substance is a human reality.

Such a comparison of Hegel's picture of ethical consciousness to Kant's categories for judgment, however, fails if its further development is taken into account. One can read the project of the *Phenomenology* as an attempt to systematically develop the Kantian categories, since at the culminating level of *absolute knowledge*, it appears that the structures of ethical substance are indeed the structures of reality itself. These categories, however, are now no longer reserved for the human faculty of cognition; they have an absolute meaning. In the first chapter (Consciousness), the categories of *quality* and *quantity* are developed. In the second chapter (Self-Consciousness), Hegel develops the categories of *relationship*. Finally, the categories of *modality* are expressed in the differences among the domains of reason (possibility), Spirit (reality), and absolute knowledge (necessity). A discussion of the logical structure of self-consciousness, therefore, comes down to an examination of Hegel's version of the categories of relationship.

## I. CONSCIOUSNESS AND "THE DOCTRINE OF BEING" (*SEINSLEHRE*)

The *Phenomenology*'s starting point is the relationship between 'consciousness' and the immediately given 'thing'. The knowledge of such a relationship must be called 'absolute'. It is possible to speak about things that have their own substantial existence only for an absolute, philosophical consciousness, since the existence of the thing is thereby acknowledged as an independent existence that transcends its relationship to the knowing consciousness. This does not mean,

however, that the *Phenomenology* a priori presupposes the possibility of absolute knowledge. The relationship between consciousness and the 'thing' is a contradictory one: on the one hand, the thing that is 'meant' in sense consciousness has an existence for itself, but, on the other hand, the thing is knowable only because it is given to the *senses*. As a consequence, the thing's existence depends on perceptual consciousness. The thing is not known in itself, then, but only relative to the senses. The project of the *Phenomenology* is to systematically develop the conditions that must be satisfied in order to overcome the contradiction just mentioned. The project's result is not merely to conclude that those conditions may be satisfied but also that they really are satisfied over the course of European history. Moreover, Hegel aspires to make clear that the process of history must necessarily be understood as the expression of an absolute subject, the *absolute spirit*. Therefore, the realized conditions are not just a specific historical interpretation of reality, they also express the logical structure of reality itself. The conditions under which it makes sense to speak about knowledge of reality coincide with the process in which reality makes itself manifest as reality.

This result of the *Phenomenology* makes it possible to recapitulate the whole preceding development. The developed historical conditions are not only *transcendental conditions* that make absolute (philosophical) knowledge possible, but they can also be understood as the logical structures of reality itself. According to this line of argumentation, the conditions developed in the *Phenomenology*'s first chapter can be related to the logical determinations of Hegel's Doctrine of Being (as expanded in the *Encyclopedia of Philosophical Sciences*).<sup>2</sup>

In the first part of the chapter Consciousness, entitled Sense-Certainty (*sinnliche Gewißheit*), the categories of *quality* are developed. Consciousness immediately stands open to the world of the senses; it pretends to have immediate knowledge of an independent reality. In the Logic of Being, this first (undetermined) determination of reality is called 'being' (*Sein*).<sup>3</sup> The category 'being' determines reality as a reality that is fundamentally knowable. There is no existence that is not knowable. This 'being', however, has no determination of its own, hence its independence is not expressed. 'Being'

expresses the identity of consciousness and reality. Consciousness is what knows; 'being' exists only as 'being' that is known. As independent from other items of consciousness, a 'being' has its own quality; it differs from qualities that are not its own. 'Being' can only exist as a determined 'being'. In the *Encyclopedia's* Logic of Being, this 'determined being' is called *Dasein*.<sup>4</sup> In the *Phenomenology*, the same logical movement is accomplished when perception distinguishes one immediately given thing from another.

A quality, however, that is only determined in its difference from other qualities still has no independence. The quality has to be determined as this special quality in the midst of the other qualities. In the *Phenomenology* this is expressed in the movement of 'pointing out'. A thing is what it is because it differentiates *itself* from other qualities: the thing differs from all other qualities because it returns from this difference to itself, into its own quality that persists. At this point the Doctrine of Being introduces the category 'being-for-itself' (*Fürsichsein*).<sup>5</sup> An independent quality does not lose itself in its differing from other qualities, because the difference explicates the way the quality remains. The category 'being-for-itself', therefore, expresses quality as such, namely, the quality that is determined in itself.

The categories being, determinate being, and being-for-itself somehow recapitulate the Kantian categories of quality: reality, negation, and limitation. The Hegelian categories, however, are the categories of reality itself. They do not one-sidedly refer to the human faculty of cognition. Moreover, in Hegel's version, the categories are internally related: 'being' that is mediated by 'negation' develops into 'determinate being'. 'Being-for-itself' is the dialectical unity of 'being' and 'determinate being', namely, the mediated immediate quality that has returned from its mediation to itself.

In the Doctrine of Being, after the categories of quality, Hegel develops his equivalents for the Kantian categories of *quantity*. Once again, however, they are not simply introduced as a new type of category; Hegel develops the internal necessity for a transition from quality to quantity, starting from the final stage and result of quality's development: being-for-itself. Being that is explicated as being-for-itself is expressed as an individual thing: it is 'one' (*eins*). Yet 'one' is

not a category of quantity; the unity of 'one' is still immersed in quality. It is a qualitative unity, being that is understood as an independent thing. The *one* thematically expresses what is clear from the observer's perspective at the level of sense-certainty: consciousness stands related to a multiplicity of independent things.

The determination of independent things, however, can no longer be expressed as a difference between things; the determination must also be 'independent'. Things must differ from themselves. Therefore, the transition from 'one' into 'negative unity' has to be made. The thing itself encloses a multiplicity of qualities, so this 'negative unity' also is not a pure category of quantity. *Negative unity* thematically expresses what is made clear from the observer's perspective in the chapter Perception: perception stands related to a 'thing of many qualities'.

The multiplicity of qualities undermines the unity. Therefore, quality itself has to be sublated into quantity. 'Quantity' is the dialectical unity of the 'one' and 'negative unity'. As quantity, the 'one' is denied; it has transformed itself into a multiplicity. Nevertheless the 'one' is also preserved, for as quantity, multiplicity has a continuity. In the *Phenomenology* this development is discussed in the transition from perception to understanding. Understanding objectifies nature as a domain of mutually affecting forces; this objectification corresponds to the mathematical or quantified techniques of modern science. The real perception of nature is no longer a qualitative one; scientific perception is a quantitative, intersubjective measuring of operationalized qualities.

Hegel's first category of quantity is 'pure quantity', the quantity that is still undetermined.<sup>6</sup> This logical category corresponds to the insight of philosophical consciousness at the level of sense-certainty in the *Phenomenology*. Here philosophical consciousness recognizes how natural consciousness relates to nature. At this stage, nature is the quantitative nature of time and space, the 'after-and-besides-one-another', as Kant calls it. Here quality is reduced to quantity; whatever exists, exists outside itself. The spatio-temporal nature is nature that repeats itself endlessly; it is a unity because all nature belongs to the same time and the same space. At this level, differences in nature can only be expressed by pointing out different positions within the coordinates of time and space.

Any determination of a thing in terms of space and time remains external to the thing, for everything has temporal and spatial coordinates. And any thing can have any set of coordinates in time and space. Therefore, to determine a specific thing one needs to connect this pure quantitative determination with some qualitative determination: *Quantum* is the determined quantity.<sup>7</sup> It is quantity with the specific quality of being just *this* quantity and not another.

In the *Phenomenology*, quantum is at issue in the chapter Perception. Here philosophical consciousness knows that the unity of 'the thing of many qualities' essentially is the quantum. Only the unity of a specific *number* of qualities is important; perception has no criterion for determining the specificity of those qualities.

Being, however, that is determined as quantum is still underdetermined. It remains arbitrary whether it is this quantum or another. Therefore the quantum has to be sublated into *degree*, i.e., into the intrinsic quantum, the quantum that determines itself.<sup>8</sup> Degree is the quantum that is qualitatively determined. As an example, Hegel mentions the specific gravity of matter. Hegel's move here makes clear that the quantitative determination of being presupposes quality.

One intrinsic quantity, however, depends on its relationship to another intrinsic quantity. Temperature, for example, is not a quantum just because it presupposes a specific quality; a quantum is determined in comparison to another quantum. The quantum, therefore, presupposes a relationship between qualities. One temperature is fixed in comparison to a different temperature, or it is fixed as the relationship of one variable to another in a physical law (for example, the law of thermodynamics:  $p \cdot V/T = c$ ).

If it is understood that the quantum corresponds to a relationship of qualities, it is also clear that degree develops itself into the *measure* (*das Maß*), i.e., the dialectical unity of quality and quantity.<sup>9</sup> For by now it has become explicit that there is a difference between the quality of the quantum as a *determined* quantity and the relationship of qualities that this determination presupposes. Quality and quantity refer to each other. The relationship of qualities is *expressed* in terms of inherent quantitative proportions.

Once again, the categorical development from degree into

measure can be recovered in the *Phenomenology*. For the philosophical consciousness embodied in Understanding, reality exists as a multitude of forces that are real insofar as they manifest themselves. Their manifestation is expressed as a specific quantum. The manifestation of one force, however, is always related to other forces, to "the interplay of forces," as Hegel calls it. Therefore the quantum that expresses a force can only be determined if 'force' is understood as law, i.e., as a mathematical relationship between different physical qualities. This explicates the difference between the world of physical qualities and that of their quantitative expression.

The interplay of forces is developed into the "first truth of understanding." According to this so-called truth, reality is a "quiet domain or kingdom of laws" (*ruhiges Reich von Gesetzen*). This first 'truth' formulates the mutual dependence of quality and quantity. In a law, the relation between natural qualities appears in a quantitative formula. Yet, at the same time, the relational nature of the law makes clear that to determine a situation or 'being' as quantum presupposes a relationship of different qualities.

The internal relationship between quality and quantity seen here implies a switch-over between quantity and quality. If a quantity surpasses a certain level, it can transcend the 'measure' of the quality that it expresses. In the *Phenomenology*, this internal relationship between quality and quantity is pointedly expressed in the "second truth of understanding," which shows that the 'quiet kingdom' of the first truth presupposes the unrest of a process, which Hegel formulates as equality becoming unequal and as inequality becoming equal. The meaning of this process can be understood if one analyzes a law of nature: the law of nature has a mathematical form in which a force is expressed as a quantitative relationship between some physical variables. A force, thereby, becomes unequal to itself, while at the same time those unequal physical variables are made equal, i.e., their specific quantitative relationship expresses the reality of one force. The law of nature, therefore, has a continuing existence in a process in which the equal becomes unequal and the unequal becomes equal. The second truth of understanding is that there are no fixed qualities. Qualities transform themselves into other qualities; to fix one quality



is possible only if that quality is expressed in a quantitative relationship to other qualities. Once more it appears that quality and quantity determine each other.

The mutual dependence of quality and quantity makes clear that 'being' cannot one-sidedly be determined as the single entity (*Sein*). *Sein* has revealed itself as the ongoing process of switching quantity into quality and quality into quantity. In this process, every substantial entity perishes. Substantial being cannot coincide with this process of *Sein*. Therefore, the *measure* develops itself into *essence*. This development marks the transition from a 'logic of being' (*Seinslogik*) to a 'logic of essence' (*Wesenslogik*). At this level, 'being' is determined as *essence*, as an ideal entity that precedes the domain of *Sein*. This transition corresponds to the *Phenomenology's* sublation of the first and second truth of understanding into the  $I = I$ , which is elaborated in the chapter Self-Consciousness. In this transition, it has become clear that the identification of the laws of nature presupposes the self-identity of the scientist. The identification of quality as quality, i.e., the identification of quality as a supra-natural essence, refers to a self-consciousness that understands its own essence as the essence of all qualities. All qualities 'exist' as far as they are identified by the self-consciousness. But because they are identified by the self-consciousness, properly their identity is that of the self-consciousness. In the next section, I will discuss the correspondence of the logical structure of self-consciousness presented in the *Phenomenology* to the *Encyclopedia's* Logic of Essence.

## 2. THE LOGICAL STRUCTURE OF SELF-CONSCIOUSNESS

In supra-natural essence, being is sublated. Substantial being presupposes an internal, nonsensible identity, namely, *essence*. Essence is not the result of an abstraction performed by understanding, therefore essence is not determined by sensible being (*sinnliches Sein*). On the contrary, a sensible entity cannot be determined without essence. Accordingly, to determine essence is a matter for essence itself.

Essence has already developed itself into difference (*Unterschied*), i.e., determined essence.<sup>10</sup> As *difference*, however, essence loses its identity, and hence it seems that the difference between essence and difference is already suspended. As ground or 'foundation' (*Grund*), difference is taken back (*zurückgenommen*) into essence.<sup>11</sup> Subsisting as ground, essence is immediately determined in itself.

The logical process in which essence, difference, and ground circulate in themselves expresses the logical structure that characterizes the process of recognition (*Anerkennung*) in the *Phenomenology*. Self-consciousness thinks itself to be the essence as a supra-natural identity; for philosophical consciousness, however, 'self-consciousness' results from the sublation of consciousness. Like essence, self-consciousness is not determined relative to what exists in nature but solely in relation to itself, viz., to self-consciousness.

Self-consciousness is determined insofar as it stands in a symmetrical relationship to another self-consciousness. But again, this determination is viewed as a threat to the identity of self-consciousness. The difference between itself and the other self-consciousness, therefore, must be overcome, for self-consciousness must be assured that it has all along (*immer schon*) recognized *itself* in the other self-consciousness.

In the situation of being ground (*Grund*), essence has taken back its mediation through difference, resulting in a new (mediated) immediacy that Hegel calls 'existence' (*Existenz*).<sup>12</sup> Insofar as it is immediate, that is, it appears as something natural, but at the same time, the essence is sublated natural being. This signifies that there is a difference between essence and natural existence. As existence (*Existenz*), essence is understood as the unity of reflection in itself and reflection in otherness. This curious, dual logic of 'existence' characterizes the logical structure of the first stage of self-consciousness' development, namely, 'desire' (*Begierde*). As desire, self-consciousness recognizes the difference between itself and nature; it knows its own essence as reflection in itself, which differs from nature. At the same time, however, desire knows it can have 'existence' only if its essence can be posited as the essence of nature; in this sense, *Begierde* is reflection into otherness.

The contradiction inherent in existence—to be both reflection in

itself and reflection in otherness—is sublated in the ‘thing’ (*das Ding*).<sup>13</sup> Existence’s reflection into otherness has its starting point in the appearance of essence as ground. The thing, therefore, is the unity in which ground’s reflection into otherness has again withdrawn itself back into the ground. The thing is the ground that is mediated by its reflection into otherness. The thing is the immediate unity of ‘matter and form’ (*Materie und Form*).<sup>14</sup>

In the *Phenomenology*, the logical structure of the thing can be recovered in the precarious existence of the servant (*Knecht*). The ‘servant’ is self-consciousness that has experienced the fear of death: the servant knows that nature is not a strange reality. This knowledge is expressed in his recognition of the other self-consciousness as his master. In the master, the servant recognizes the absolute power of nature as his own essence. For the self-consciousness of the servant, therefore, the otherness of nature is sublated. But the servant is only the immediate unity of self-consciousness and nature; nature exists ‘in’ the servant’s self-consciousness in the form of fear of death. Nevertheless, the servant stands for the most primitive self-consciousness of the unity of mind and body.<sup>15</sup>

In the thing, the contradiction viewed in existence returns as an internal contradiction, since the thing’s ‘matter’ has a double status. On the one hand, matter seems independent of form, in which case matter is understood as the elements or ‘stuff’ (*Materien*) of the thing; on the other hand, matter is said to depend on form, in which case ‘matter’ is understood as the qualities whereby the thing secures its unity. The thing must, therefore, develop itself into ‘appearance’ (*Erscheinung*).<sup>16</sup> In appearance, the double status of matter has become explicit, since, as appearance, the thing is understood to be both the appearing of an internal essence and ‘just’ an appearance, i.e., as a thing that is not identical to its essence.

Hegel subdivides the elaboration of ‘appearance’ into three steps. First, ‘appearance’ must be explicated as ‘the world of appearance’ (*die Welt der Erscheinung*).<sup>17</sup> There is no sense in talking about just one appearance, since ‘appearance’ refers to an essence. Insofar as appearance and essence are distinguished, essence can be viewed as having its own appearance, and for this appearance, the whole rea-

soning can be repeated. As a consequence, one appearance refers to a totality, a world of appearances.

In a second phase, the explication of appearance as 'world' throws light on the double status of appearance. In the thing as appearance, 'form' has a double meaning. On one hand, form is the definiteness of the 'essence'; in this case form is understood as 'laws of nature', relationships or regularities that express themselves in nature. Form is here the form of an essential content.<sup>18</sup> On the other hand, form has the meaning of external form; it is the changing form of the individual, natural things.

Third, the distinction between the form's two meanings is taken back in 'relationship' (*das Verhältnis*).<sup>19</sup> The immediate phase of 'relationship' is the relationship between the totality and its parts: all natural things are distinguished from one another, yet, in their distinction, they also are part of the total world of appearances. Appearances are related to themselves and at the same time to other appearances. This difference between the two is that between 'nature' as the appearance of laws of nature and nature as a collection of immediate perceptible things.

If the relationship among appearances is considered an 'internal' relationship, i.e., as a relationship both of and for the appearances themselves, the external relationship between part and totality develops itself into the relation of 'force and its expression' (*Kraft und ihre Äußerung*).<sup>20</sup> In this form of relation, explains Hegel, the world of appearances expresses a world of essences. This does not mean, however, that there is no distinction between the two worlds. In a third form of relationship, the relation between 'internality and externality' (*Inneres und Äußeres*), this point is made clear.<sup>21</sup> In this synthesis of the two previous forms, two sides appear: The first establishes the independence of the two terms of the relation; as in the relation between parts and the whole, the worlds of internality and externality do not coincide. On the other side, one realm is understood as the expression of the other, as in the relationship of force and expression.

The logic of 'appearance' in the *Encyclopedia* is illustrated in the dialectical logic of the servant's labor in the Lordship and Bondage

chapter of the *Phenomenology*. Just as 'appearance' elaborates the internal contradiction of the 'thing', 'labor' develops the internal contradiction of the servant. As self-consciousness, the servant has a supra-natural essence, which essence, however, is real only if it appears. Labor is the appearance of the servant's internal essence, namely, self-consciousness. Once again appearance passes through three moments.

The 'world of appearance' takes the form of the 'world of labor products' in the *Phenomenology*. The labor product refers to a differentiated essence, namely, the conception or intention of the servant. This conception is different from the labor product insofar as it has its own appearance, etc. The world of labor products expresses the ongoing dialectics between product and conception: the product enables a better conception, and a better conception enables a production that in its turn is the basis for a still better conception, etc.

The form of the labor product also has a double meaning. Its form is the form of the servant's conception. Moreover, form is related to the form of the labor product as a separated, perceptible thing.

Third, the three forms of relationship can be recovered in the labor product as appearance. Every product is a part of the total world of production. Moreover, the product is the expression of the servant's labor power. Finally, the world of labor products is the objectification of an inner world, namely, the servant's conceptual world.

The way the product of labor develops as appearance makes plain that it makes no sense to understand the mind as an entity outside nature, as Descartes thought he could with the 'cogito'. Mind's conceptions exist only if they are objectified in the social division of labor. In this division of labor, the conceptions appear as the objective understanding of reality. The social division of labor division is, so to speak, the 'body' of the 'mind' (or, in Hegel's terminology, of self-consciousness).

The third moment of the Logic of Essence is 'reality' (*Wirklichkeit*), the dialectical synthesis of essence and appearance.<sup>22</sup> At the level of reality, it is made explicit not just that essence presupposes appear-

ance, but, conversely, that appearance also presupposes essence. Reality is the concrete totality of essence and appearance. It is subdivided into three moments, namely, 'condition' (*Bedingung*), 'identity' (*die Sache*), and 'activity' (*Tätigkeit*). In condition, appearance is understood as the moment of reality; in identity, essence is understood as the moment of reality; finally, in activity, the unity of condition and identity is understood as a process.

'Reality' passes through three stages in its development, which can be considered Hegel's version of Kant's categories of relationship. The first stage of reality Hegel calls the 'relation of substantiality'.<sup>23</sup> At this level, the three submoments of condition, identity, and activity 'stand' in an immediate unity. Reality is here understood as substantiality realizing itself in a process of self-actualization. Reality is the unity of 'substance' and 'accident'.

The second stage of reality is the 'relation of causality', i.e., the relation of cause and effect.<sup>24</sup> Within this relationship, the three submoments are differentiated for themselves. As cause and effect, identity and condition can only be determined in their mutual relationship, a relationship which, moreover, is understood as activity.

The third stage of reality consists of the 'relation of reciprocity' (*Wechselwirkung*).<sup>25</sup> Here, in one respect, both terms of the relationship maintain their independence. In another respect, however, each term is the condition for the existence of the other. Therefore, the relationship of reciprocity is the dialectical unity of the relation of substantiality and that of causality. As in the relation of causality, both terms can only be determined in their mutual relationship. And as in the relation of substantiality, both terms are the concrete unity of the three submoments condition, identity and activity. This time, however, these submoments are objectified in the symmetrical relationship between the terms

The *Encyclopedia's* logic of reality can be recovered as the servant's 'reality' in Lordship and Bondage. This time the servant's reality is not considered from inside (the perspective of the servant himself, i.e., his appearance in the labor product), but from an outside perspective (*Außenperspektiv*). At issue is the logic of the servant's consciousness 'in and for himself' (*an und für sich*). In the ser-

vant's reality, the three submoments return as the way items in external nature serve as the condition of all labor (*Bedingung*), as the servant's internal conception of the labor product (*Sache*), and finally as the servant's labor activity (*Tätigkeit*).

The servant's direct activity of laboring forms the immediate unity of the three submoments. At this level what is 'real' is the relation of *substantiality*: the activity of labor is the ongoing 'autonomous' process, in which conception and realization of conception presuppose one another.

If the relative independence of the submoments is established, however, the servant's reality presents the relationship of *causality*. Servant and labor product are differentiated as independent entities that are related to one another by labor activity. Nature is the objective region, the context, in which labor manifests itself as the cause of the labor product.

In the end, when all nature is transformed by labor activity, the servant recognizes his own essence in nature. From the outside perspective, this means the reality of a symmetrical relationship between the servant and nature since the essence realized in the servant's labor appears to be nothing other than the essence realized by nature itself. The structure of this relationship indeed is that of *reciprocity*. Nature realizes its essence insofar as it is cultivated by the servant's labor; the servant realizes his essence insofar he cultivates nature. Yet this relationship is not asymmetrical in the sense that the servant is the actor and nature is a passive medium. Both essences are equally essential. In the end, it makes no difference whether the servant or nature is the actor of the labor process.

### 3. CONCLUSION

At the end of the *Phenomenology of Spirit*, Hegel remarks, "Conversely, to every abstract moment of Science there corresponds a form of appearing Spirit as such" (*Umgekehrt entspricht jedem abstrakten Momente der Wissenschaft eine Gestalt des erscheinenden Geistes überhaupt*). This sentence is responsible for a discussion to which several

authors have contributed. What 'science', which of the many versions of logic did Hegel have in mind when he wrote this sentence? Otto Pöggeler concludes that "we have ample reason to confine the question about the logic in the *Phenomenology* to the *Phenomenology* itself and give up all attempts to establish a parallelism between the *Phenomenology* and some version of the *Logic*."<sup>26</sup> This conclusion, however, results from researching a version of the *Logic* that chronologically preceded the *Phenomenology*. In this chapter, I have tried to relate the *Phenomenology* to a *Logic* that was written afterwards: the *Logic* of the *Encyclopedia* of 1817. I concur with Pöggeler's view that the *Logic* of the *Phenomenology* itself is of central importance, but it is so precisely to the degree that the *Phenomenology* caused some transformation in Hegel's conception of logic.

Connecting the logic of the *Phenomenology* to that of the *Encyclopedia* shows that the categories of relationship are thematically expressed only at the level of self-consciousness. Therefore, I cannot agree with Trede's attempt to settle the dispute between Fulda and Pöggeler about the systematic place of the categories of relationship. Trede writes as follows:

Fulda claims that the categories of relation should be accepted as the basis of the chapter on self-consciousness (Fulda, 1975). On the other hand, Pöggeler asserts—and correctly so, to my mind—that the Hegelian relational categories of 'thing' and 'property' and 'power' and 'understanding' constitute the basis of the chapters Perception and Force and the Understanding.<sup>27</sup>

Of course, Pöggeler is right when he declares, in relation to the *Phenomenology*, "If the thing-property relation is understood as power and the play of forces, then the object displays a structure that we find in a more developed way in life and self-consciousness."<sup>28</sup> The question is, however, what structures are the structures of the 'object' itself? At the level of consciousness all relationships appear to be relationships of self-consciousness. Therefore only at the level of self-consciousness are the categories of relationship thematically expressed.

Fulda's position, however, is also open to criticism. He states:



The categories of autonomous relationship are substantiality, causality, and reciprocity. It is difficult to see that the dialectic of self-consciousness has the first two as its basis, since one usually understands by 'self-consciousness' an individual consciousness, in which is found neither a relation of substance to accidents nor a relation among accidents. But Hegel expressly claims that the concept of self-consciousness is first perfected in the doubling of self-consciousnesses. One self-consciousness and another self-consciousness stand related as members of an autonomous relationship that posits itself as independent, yet their essence is, at the same time, to comport themselves to it as substance, i.e., to be accidents.<sup>29</sup>

Throughout this chapter I have argued that the sense in which the categories of relationship are related to the development of the 'thing' makes those categories the logical equivalent of the relationships developed in the 'servant' of the *Phenomenology's* Lordship and Bondage chapter.

## NOTES

1. For example, Hans Friedrich Fulda, *Das Problem einer Einleitung in Hegels Wissenschaft der Logik* (Frankfurt am Main: Klostermann, 1975); Otto Pöggeler, "Die Komposition der *Phänomenologie des Geistes*," in *Hegel-Studien* 3 (1966).

2. Georg Friedrich Wilhelm Hegel, *Enzyklopädie der philosophischen Wissenschaften* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp Verlag, 1970); hereafter cited as *Enz.*

3. *Enz.*, §86.
4. *Enz.*, §89.
5. *Enz.*, §96.
6. *Enz.*, §99.
7. *Enz.*, §101.
8. *Enz.*, §103.
9. *Enz.*, §107.
10. *Enz.*, §116.
11. *Enz.*, §121.
12. *Enz.*, §123.
13. *Enz.*, §125.

14. Enz, §129.

15. In Enz, §130, the thing is determined as "der Widerspruch, nach seiner negativen Einheit die Form zu sein, in der die Materie bestimmt und zu *Eigenschaften* herabgesetzt ist (§125), und zugleich aus *Materien zu* bestehen, die in der Reflexion des Dings in sich zugleich ebenso selbständige als negierte sind. Das Ding ist so, die wesentliche Existenz als eine in sich selbst aufhebende zu sein, ist *Erscheinung*." These formulations suggest that there is, instead, a link between the 'thing' and the logical structure of *perception* (the thing of many qualities). In response to this it can be said that all forms of consciousness are repeated at the level of self-consciousness. In a systematic point of view, the servant repeats the 'thing of many qualities' in the form of self-consciousness. The servant is the self-conscious 'thing of many qualities'. He is the organism which expresses his life functions in many ways and at the same time the self-consciousness which brings these functions to unity in his fear of death.

16. Enz, §131.

17. Enz, §132.

18. "So ist die Form Inhalt und mach ihrer entwickelten Bestimmtheit das Gesetz der Erscheinung"(Enz, §133).

19. Enz, §135.

20. Enz, §136.

21. Enz, §138.

22. Enz, §142.

23. Enz, §150.

24. Enz, §153.

25. Enz, §155.

26. "So haben wir Anlaß genug, uns auch bei der Frage nach der Logik in der Phänomenologie an die Phänomenologie selbst zu halten und alle Versuche, die Phänomenologie mit einer Ausarbeitung der Logik parallelisieren zu wollen, zurückweisen." Otto Pöggeler, *Hegels Idee einer Phänomenologie des Geistes* (Freiburg and Munich: Alber, 1973), p. 271.

27. "Fulda behauptet, daß die Relationskategorien als die Grundlage des Selbstbewußtseinskaptels anzunehmen seien (Fulda, 1975). Dagegen macht Pöggeler—meines Erachtens zurecht—geltend, daß die Hegelschen Relationskategorien Ding und Eigenschaft und Kraft und Verstand die logische Grundlage der Kapitel 'Wahrnehmung und Kraft' und 'Verstand' bilden." Johann Heinrich Trede, "Phänomenologie und Logik. Zu den Grundlagen einer Diskussion," in *Hegel-Studien* 10 (1975): 203.

28. "Wird die Relation Ding-Eigenschaften als Kraft und Spiel der Kräfte

gefaßt, dann zeigt der Gegenstand eine Struktur, die wir in einer erfüllteren Form am Leben und Selbstbewußtsein finden." Pöggeler, *Hegel's Idee*, p. 273.

29. "Die Kategorien des selbständigen Verhältnisses sind Substantialität, Kausalität und Wechselwirkung. Das die Dialektik des Selbstbewußtseins die ersten beiden zur Grundlage hat, ist schwer zu erkennen, weil man unter Selbstbewußtsein zunächst ein einzelnes Bewußtsein von sich versteht und darin weder ein Verhältnis der Substanz zu den Akzidenzen noch der Akzidenzen zueinander antrifft. Aber Hegel verweist ausdrücklich darauf, daß der Begriff des Selbstbewußtseins erst in der Verdopplung des Selbstbewußtseins vollendet ist. Ein Selbstbewußtsein und ein anderes Selbstbewußtsein verhalten sich wie die Glieder des selbständigen Verhältnisses zueinander, die als selbständige sich setzen, aber deren Wesen ist, zugleich in Beziehung auf die Substanz, d.i. als Akzidenzen zu sein." Fulda, *Einführung*, p. 143.



## 8

# SKEPTICISM AND THE UNHAPPY CONSCIOUSNESS in Hegel's *Phenomenology of Spirit*

JEFFREY C. KINLAW

*Mit dem Selbstbewusstsein sind wir also  
nun in das einheimische Reiche der  
Wahrheit eingetreten.*<sup>1</sup>

In the *Phenomenology*, Hegel maintains that self-consciousness is the locus of truth, at least for self-consciousness as a distinct form of consciousness. This means that the ultimate criterion for determining the difference between appearance and reality, or what we take to be true and real and what is indeed true and real, is to be determined by the nature of self-consciousness.<sup>2</sup> In short, to paraphrase Terry Pinkard, this means that the foundation for what consciousness takes as rationally authoritative for determining whether or not the standard for knowledge and certainty has been met lies within

the nature of self-consciousness. As a form of consciousness, self-consciousness, of course, harbors inconsistency; that is, its knowledge of objects or its experience can be shown to contradict the presuppositions (what it takes as the rational authority underwriting its knowledge of objects) that allegedly make its knowledge possible. However, the truth (so to speak) of self-consciousness remains intact; no self-conscious individual properly can accept anything as rationally authoritative that it does not itself accept freely as rationally authoritative. This has significant consequences for understanding the relation between us and what Hegel calls the Absolute. As we shall see, the Absolute or Absolute Spirit must be a reality to which we can commit ourselves freely as individuals and to which, according to the truth of self-consciousness, we can contribute in some respect.

I argue in this chapter that Hegel employs a skeptical argument, more accurately viewed as a subargument within a broader argument or method he calls a "self-completing skepticism" (*sich vollbringende Skeptizismus*),<sup>3</sup> to establish in the *Self-Consciousness* chapter a prima facie case for a communal and pragmatic basis for truth and rational authority. The core of Hegel's argument is found in his discussion of the 'unhappy consciousness'. Accordingly, my primary focus will be on that section. The emergence within the argument of the *Phenomenology* of a communal foundation for the ultimate source of rational authority requires in turn that we interpret Absolute Spirit as a communal and cultural tradition rather than as what I will call a "theological Absolute."<sup>4</sup> The interpretation of Absolute Spirit as a decidedly intersubjective and social reality or level of being has become commonplace. I intend, however, to connect that interpretation with the claim that the final source of rational authority must be a social and cultural tradition, and both with the further claim that Hegel provides a strong prima facie case for his claim in his discussion of the unhappy consciousness. In short, only a communal basis for rational authority can resolve the contradictions inherent within the unhappy consciousness. I claim that Hegel's argument in the Unhappy Consciousness section establishes only a prima facie case, precisely because the argument is incomplete and thus requires the Reason chapter to complete it.<sup>5</sup> The Unhappy Consciousness section estab-

lishes the requirement for a communal conception of truth, whereas the fulfillment of this requirement entails that self-consciousness in its new form as reason must undergo additional education. Nonetheless the Unhappy Consciousness section, for the reasons I suggest above, is perhaps the pivotal section within the education (*Bildung*) of consciousness that Hegel traces in the *Phenomenology*.

Before proceeding further, I need to say a little more about the details of my argument. As I will attempt to demonstrate, Hegel contends that the contradictions inherent within the form of consciousness that he calls the 'unhappy consciousness' can be resolved only by amending (1) the self-understanding of self-consciousness; (2) the understanding of the Absolute or "the unchangeable" (*das Unwandelbare*); and (3) the way in which self-consciousness relates itself to the Absolute. Amending (1) and (2) leads directly to the transformation of (3). On the other hand, failure to amend (1) and (2) assures that contradictions within the structure of the unhappy consciousness, that is, among (1), (2), and (3), remain intact. The major insight obtained by the unhappy consciousness is the realization that self-consciousness cannot be the ultimate or absolute authority for truth—it cannot be what Hegel calls *das Wahre* or *das Wesentliche*—but must recognize the rational authority of an 'other'. In short, self-consciousness discovers the impossibility of demanding that all perspectives conform to its own self-proclaimed absolute and solely objective standpoint, along with realizing the impossibility of embodying such an absolute standpoint. Even though self-consciousness relinquishes its claim to absolute authority, it must do so in a way that does not violate the nature and truth of self-consciousness. That is, self-consciousness must retain the authority to accede only to an external authority to which it commits itself freely, namely, to an authority that in turn can recognize the partial and mediated authority of an individual self-consciousness. Such an authority external to self-consciousness can only be a community sustained by a common tradition to which an individual self-consciousness can contribute and by which an individual self-consciousness is shaped. And this brings us to the amendment of (2).

In his analysis of the unhappy consciousness, Hegel indicates that

this form of self-consciousness attempts to resolve the contradiction inherent within its nature (i.e., between its claim of absoluteness based on the law of self-consciousness and the recognition of its individuality and contingency) by affirming something radically other than itself as the ultimate and supreme rational authority. Put differently, the unhappy consciousness accepts the provinciality of its own epistemological and rational standpoint and assumes that a truly objective standpoint must have its foundation in something radically other than its own individual, finite consciousness. As such, the Absolute remains perpetually elusive, and self-consciousness can never be in a position to know whether what it takes to be true and real really is true and real, precisely because the final standard for truth and certainty is something to which self-consciousness has no access. Accordingly, access to the Absolute must be received as a gift or favor, and this violates the nature of self-consciousness, precisely because it entails the self-denial of self-consciousness, namely, the relinquishment of its claim to determine for itself what it will accept as the ultimate rational authority. As Hegel attempts to show, the education of the unhappy consciousness involves in part the realization that its self-understanding as a form of self-consciousness is correlated with its understanding of what it takes as the ultimate basis for rational authority. In sum, the amendment of (1) correlates with the revision of (2).

The chapter proceeds as follows. First, I provide a brief account of Hegel's appropriation of skepticism and the way in which he employs a skeptical argument in his analysis and criticism of various forms of consciousness. Second, I explicate the requirements for self-consciousness with the aim of indicating the way in which the errors of the unhappy consciousness (i.e., concerning self-consciousness and the Absolute) are implicit within the structure of self-consciousness. Third, I turn to the unhappy consciousness itself and show the way in which Hegel's analysis provides a *prima facie* case for a communal basis for rational authority and the way in which his case for a communal foundation for truth (i.e., what one takes as the criterion for truth) emerges as the conclusion of his skeptical argument.



## I.

Hegel's first reference to skepticism in the *Phenomenology* occurs at paragraph 78, wherein he describes the method of the *Phenomenology* as a "self-completing skepticism." From the start, it is evident that skepticism is to play a central and positive role in the formation (*Bildung*) of consciousness whose ultimate goal is knowledge that is properly scientific.<sup>6</sup> In this sense, skepticism is *elenchic* and thereby provides one with the dexterity to examine the truth of things. Hegel writes: "Skepticism, which directs itself to the entire range of appearing consciousness, makes spirit for the first time fit to examine truth."<sup>7</sup> The education of consciousness is completed once a form of consciousness emerges wherein the standard for truth and rational authority presupposed by that form of consciousness is adequate to account for its knowledge of objects.<sup>8</sup> In this sense, a self-completing skepticism is a tantamount to a successful Socratic *elenchus*. As such, Hegel's appropriation of skepticism differs from ancient skepticism—the only historical form of skepticism that he took seriously—in two important respects. First, Hegel does not question whether we have genuine knowledge in our everyday experience of the world or in what Joseph Flay calls "the natural standpoint."<sup>9</sup> That we have knowledge is accepted as given. The question, as we shall see, becomes whether the presuppositions that account for and underwrite our knowledge are adequate for that knowledge. So again the issue is not whether we have knowledge but rather whether the principles we employ to explain and justify our knowledge are adequate to explain and justify it. To this extent, Hegel departs from a dominant theme in modern epistemology that attempts to isolate the structure of consciousness and determine its scope and competence independent of its actual relation to what it knows. By assuming that we indeed have knowledge, Hegel develops his epistemology in the context of the actual relation that consciousness has to the world it claims to know.<sup>10</sup> Second, traditional skepticism is simply an external criticism of the subject matter to which it directs its attack. In this sense, it fails to enter genuinely into the *Sache* of its subject matter and therein expose errors or inconsistencies. For this reason, the

skeptic, as Hegel describes her, must wait passively for her prey to be delivered to her and only then to undermine the principle or argument. This form of skepticism, for Hegel, is largely unproductive. When adopted as a critical method, this form of behavior unsurprisingly and easily mutates into something juvenile, about which Hegel writes contemptuously.

But it [skepticism] holds the poles of this self-contradiction apart from one another and relates itself to it in a purely negative movement in general. If sameness is indicated to it, it points to difference, and since this difference, which it has expressed, is now held forth, it proceeds to the point to sameness. In this act its speech is a bickering of stubborn children, who say A if the other says B and B if the other says A, and who by contradicting one another obtain the satisfaction of remaining in contradiction with each other.<sup>11</sup>

Although Hegel is quite critical of a juvenile application of the *equipollence* problem, he takes that problem seriously and, accordingly, attempts to show that his skeptical method can generate a form of consciousness that is free of internal inconsistency.<sup>12</sup>

Although Hegel's dialectic is a form of skepticism, it is a method carefully designed to answer the standard epistemological objections of ancient skepticism, most notably the problem of the criterion and the separation of knowledge and reality (i.e., what is *Wissen* and what is *an sich*). Both objections originate from the distinction between consciousness and its *relata* and what stands outside consciousness and its *relata*. Hegel's strategy is to show that the distinction is actually one that lies within consciousness itself, which therefore enables him to address *within the sphere of consciousness* the problem of the criterion and the problem of an allegedly unbridgeable gap between what stands in relation to consciousness as something known and what is *an sich*. This strategy enables Hegel to avoid those traditional criticisms. How so?

First, take the problem of the criterion. As stated by Sextus Empiricus, the problem of the criterion is something like this: In order for me to justify my claim to know something, I must have a criterion that determines the legitimacy of my mode of justification.

Now suppose that someone challenges my criterion for justification. I cannot stipulate the use of my criterion without begging the question, and a justification of my criterion would itself require a further criterion for that justification, thereby producing an infinite regress. Thus I can never arrive at a criterion for assessing the legitimacy of my justification for knowing something.<sup>13</sup> Notice, however, that the objection turns on the assumption that the criterion of justification must be external to or independent of that for which it provides the criterion. Suppose, on the other hand, that the criterion is internal to the structure of knowing grounded by that criterion. Put differently, suppose that the criterion is the presuppositions underwriting knowledge claims within a specific form of consciousness. In this case, one could devise a purely internal procedure, which is precisely what Hegel does, to determine whether the criterion was adequate to underwrite knowledge within that form of consciousness. The criterion would be internally self-critical and self-corrective and thereby immune to the traditional skeptic's challenge. Second, related to the distinction between *Wissen* and *Ansichsein*, Hegel acknowledges the Pyrrhonian objection that consciousness cannot perform the test required for confirming whether the object as known corresponds to the object as it is in itself. Ostensibly, consciousness cannot peer through the veil that is the object *für* consciousness in order to compare that object with the object *an sich*. Yet suppose that the distinction between *Wissen* and *Ansichsein* is intrinsic to the way that consciousness knows anything at all. In Hegel's analysis of forms of consciousness, what consciousness takes as *die Ansich* or *das Wesen*—what is true and essential—and what consciousness knows or what something is for consciousness are two distinct “moments” or steps within the confirmation or refutation of the justification of a form of consciousness. The test becomes whether the *Ansich* is adequate to account for and underwrite the *Wissen*. More specifically, can what I take to be true, essential, and rationally authoritative for my mode of knowing account for and justify my way of knowing within that form of consciousness?

Hegel appropriates a structure of consciousness that he inherited from Kant, Reinhold, and Fichte. Stated most explicitly by Reinhold,

the structure of consciousness is embedded within his principle of representation: "in consciousness representation is distinguished through the subject from both the object and the subject and is referred to both."<sup>14</sup> As appropriated by Hegel, the structure of consciousness involves two basic moments: (1) consciousness simultaneously distinguishes itself and relates itself to something; and (2) it distinguishes the thing as related to consciousness from the thing in itself.<sup>15</sup> Every act of knowing instantiates this basic structure of consciousness. The distinction between the criterion and the justification of knowledge that it purportedly underwrites and the distinction between something as known and that thing in itself are distinctions *internal* to the structure of knowledge. Accordingly, as indicated above, the test of the criterion's adequacy or the connection between knowing and being is an internal examination. As such, Hegel does not bypass the traditional problem of the criterion. Rather he avoids the traditional skeptic's challenge by arguing for a coherence *analysis* of truth. Does what I take to be the standard for truth cohere with my experience of knowing within a specific mode of knowing, and can that standard for truth and rational authority account for my alleged knowledge?<sup>16</sup> If the answer is negative, then the form of knowing, *along with the criterion for its justification*, undergoes a self-correcting transformation. In this way Hegel's skeptical method and his analysis of truth and justification are simply part of the way in which philosophical reflection enters into the *Sache* of its object. The task of epistemology is thus the education of consciousness whereby consciousness, by reflecting on the adequacy of what it takes as rationally authoritative, brings itself to a standpoint in which that rational authority proves itself reliable as a criterion for justifying knowledge claims within that standpoint.

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## 2.

The justification for a criterion for truth, as explained in the previous section, involves the successful correlation between (a) what consciousness takes as the ultimate source and authority for truth (*die*

*Ansich, das Wesen, die Wahre*) and (b) the way in which that rational authority functions within a particular form of consciousness (*Wissen*). Inconsistency within (b) uncovers the failure of (a) as a final authority and thereby leads to the transformation of (a) and (b) in an effort to resolve the inconsistency. Self-consciousness as a form of consciousness takes the unity of self-consciousness itself as the final and ultimate authority for truth. In short, this means, as Hegel affirms, that self-consciousness is the locus of truth. A communal basis for truth or rational authority requires that self-consciousness retain its claim to determine for itself what will be the ultimate foundation for rational authority. At the same time, the assertion of this claim leads to inconsistency within self-consciousness. In the Self-Consciousness chapter, Hegel contends that inconsistency emerges once an individual self-consciousness attempts to make self-consciousness itself the ultimate authority for truth. I will argue that this inconsistency arises in part because of the way in which an ultimate rational authority is construed by self-consciousness, that is, the way in which it understands itself as the Absolute in its absoluteness as a sole and isolated authority. My argument will, I hope, provide a foundation for seeing more perspicuously the way in which this same problem is thematized in the Unhappy Consciousness section. After all, the inconsistency within the nature of self-consciousness reaches its logical extreme and conclusion in the unhappy consciousness.

If self-consciousness alone is rationally authoritative, that which stands apart from and in relation to self-consciousness must possess no inherent authority or independence in relation to self-consciousness. In Hegel's terms, the other appears before self-consciousness as utterly negative.<sup>17</sup> This means that I determine the other to exist solely for the satisfaction of my desire. Embedded within the structure of desire, however, are two potential and interrelated problems, the second arising from the requirement to recognize self-consciousness as the final authority for truth. First, the law of self-consciousness maintains that self-consciousness alone has independence, yet we must accord the other some independence in order for it to be an object of desire. Second, self-consciousness's claim to be the final rational authority remains hollow and abstract unless it is recognized as such by an other.

Put in more epistemological terms, to assert that my perspective is *the* objective and universal standpoint requires that others accede to the authority of my perspective. These others, however, are themselves self-conscious individuals and thus each an independent self-consciousness, one who presumably demands that her standpoint be the universal perspective. This inconsistency within self-consciousness is mirrored in the representation (*Vorstellung*) of the lord-serf struggle.

For me to recognize an other as the sole authority for what is rational and true, I must relinquish my own claim to independent self-consciousness in the recognition of the other. In this sense, my acknowledgment that the ultimate rational authority rests in another is a self-negation of what I ought to be as a self-conscious individual. If I am the lord in Hegel's analogy, on the other hand, I succeed in negating any claim that the serf has to independence, and I do so more successfully than I did when the other was taken as simply an object of desire. In this case, the serf himself acknowledges my absolute authority—the serf with respect to rational authority is for the lord utterly unessential (*unwesentlich*)—yet by violating the requirement for self-consciousness. Again, the serf's acceptance of the lord as the ultimate authority involves a denial of her nature as a self-conscious individual and thus the self-denial of the truth of self-consciousness. Furthermore the lord is dependent on the serf for the lord's ultimate authority to be instantiated concretely in the world. Here we can discern for the first time in Hegel's presentation the way in which his argument leads initially toward the requirement for a communal basis for rational authority. Lord and serf require mutual recognition, even if that recognition is the acknowledgment of each as lord and serf.<sup>18</sup> There can be no mutual recognition, however, because there is no common, shared space or framework with which genuine recognition between lord and serf can take place. Recognition shows clearly that there can be no truly isolated self-consciousness, that is, if the claim of self-consciousness is to be more than an abstract pronouncement lacking any concrete efficacy. Were the 'truth' of self-consciousness construed to mean simply that an individual self-consciousness recognize as authoritative only what it takes for itself to be authoritative, there would remain a sufficient play space for mutual recognition and

thus a mutual and shared sense of rational authority. Yet in its immediate expression, the requirement for self-consciousness does not allow for any sense of shared authority. Self-consciousness is the exclusive locus of truth and thereby the other has a purely negative significance. Self-consciousness in this form takes its own rational authority as utterly absolute, partly because it interprets a universal (*allgemein*) standpoint as one that is utterly absolute—a God’s eye view in all of its exclusivity. But, as we shall see, this type of absolute perspective is vacuous, unattainable, and epistemological unnecessary—what Thomas Nagel appropriately calls “the view from nowhere.”<sup>19</sup>

One way to address the inconsistency within the lord-serf analogy is simply to reassert the finality of the authority of self-consciousness and to do so in a way that attempts to overcome the requirement for recognition that mitigates the absolute independence of self-consciousness. In Hegel’s reconstruction this is the response of the Stoic, who reclaims the authority of self-consciousness by means of a more restricted requirement for its engagement with an other (to the extent that it relates to the other at all). The principle of Stoicism, as Hegel writes, is “that consciousness is a thinking being and that something is essential or true and good for consciousness only to the extent that consciousness *as a thinking being* relates itself to something.”<sup>20</sup>

The Stoic absolutizes the universality of self-consciousness by expressing that universality as pure thinking and by refusing to enter any relation that is not one of pure thinking. Stoic withdrawal, however, is simply a reversion to an abstract standpoint which cannot be instantiated or enforced within the actual world. The Skeptic, who actualizes the absolute authority of self-consciousness by negating specifically the significance or essentiality of any other (or any independent claim) which she encounters, expresses the concrete execution of the absolute perspective of self-consciousness. In this sense, Skepticism is an inversion of the Stoic relation to the other. Rather than withdraw from the actual world, the Skeptic enters the real world and consciously negates any significance or standpoint that something in the world could have for self-consciousness.

In skepticism as a form of consciousness, we observe the extreme expression and, in Hegel’s analysis, the logical conclusion of the self-

assertive claims of absolute self-consciousness. The Skeptic not only pronounces her standpoint as the sole and ultimate rational authority, she also makes good on that claim by effectively subjecting all individual claims to authority to the destructiveness of her critical power. Inherent within the skeptical stance, however, is an irresolvable contradiction, at least irresolvable within the framework of the Skeptic's self-understanding and her view of the absoluteness of a universal standpoint. On the one hand, the Skeptic, as Michael Hardimon has correctly noted, has elevated *subjectivity* to an ultimate principle. More important, this posture actually becomes a perpetuation of Stoic withdrawal in the sense that the skeptical method is a supremely private practice that precludes intentionally any involvement with a social world.<sup>21</sup> Herein lies for Hegel the ultimate expression of the ideal of negative freedom, a freedom that is isolated, purely inward, and lacking any genuine sense of commitment to anything, person or institution, outside oneself.<sup>22</sup> On the other hand, the Skeptic's self-understanding and the way in which she enforces that self-understanding within the actual world contradict what the Skeptic actually does even when she engages the world as a skeptic. Her self-appointed task is to negate the rational authority or significance of any concrete moment or thing within the world, and yet she must grant the world some inherent significance in order to live and function within the world. Unless she thereby grants the world some significance, she cannot live out her utterly negative posture toward the world. Put differently, to concretize her negative stance toward the world and thus avoid the abstractness of the Stoic, the Skeptic must relativize the absoluteness of her stance. Her identity, however, precludes any admission of relativity or the mitigation of the absoluteness of her claim to ultimate rational authority. So she vacillates between absoluteness and relativity and does so in a way that indicates the practically self-refuting nature of her skeptical stance. Hegel writes that skepticism "expresses the absolute evaporation, but the expression *is*, and consciousness is the expressed evaporation. It expresses the negativity of seeing, hearing, etc., but itself sees, hears, etc."<sup>23</sup>

Skepticism thus fails precisely because it proposes a program that is impossible to execute, and the source of the problem is easy to diag-



nose. Despite its concrete engagement of the world, skepticism retains the abstractness and disconnection, which defines the Stoic perspective. In this sense, the Skeptic attempts to uphold an ideal which no individual *qua* individual can achieve. Her inescapable individuality, which emerges within practical life, undermines the Skeptic's claim to absolute universality. This is so precisely because the absolute standpoint asserted by the Skeptic is a view from nowhere. It altogether lacks any social anchor and therefore can retain its absoluteness only by remaining disconnected from the world and thus failing to gain any concrete recognition for its absoluteness. Once the Skeptic's project is enacted, its utterly absolute claim of sole rational authority is mitigated by the requirements of everyday living. I think that Hegel is convinced that the Skeptic is aware of his dilemma: either retreat into the hollowness of Stoic aloofness or face the fact that the vicissitudes of everyday social life mitigate the absoluteness of one's claim for final rational authority. Since the former is not a live option, the Skeptic attempts to deny or circumvent the latter, thus leading to the childish form of skeptical play Hegel mocks both in the introduction and in the Skepticism sections. And yet aloofness is precisely what the Skeptic values, for he reasons that if one can negate every claim to authority one thereby can effectively assert the finality of one's one claim. But the most that he could attain is a negative universality, which as purely abstract lacks any specific content. Furthermore, everyday life reveals that the extent to which the individual Skeptic is alienated from the very foundation for truth and rational authority that lies ostensibly within the unity of self-consciousness itself. Skepticism thus points to an impasse, one that the unhappy consciousness attempts to resolve by taking up into itself the individual's alienation from the foundation for ultimate rational authority. As we shall see, the unhappy consciousness begins with the correct and important insight that self-consciousness itself cannot be the singular foundation for truth and rational authority. Self-consciousness cannot escape its own individuality and thus the contingency of any claim that it makes to rational or epistemic authority. In sum, one finds oneself inescapably rooted within a natural and social world inhabited by other free, self-conscious individuals with competing claims. What self-consciousness must learn is how to

maintain one's identity as a self-conscious individual—that one accept as authoritative only what one takes to be authoritative—within a social world and nonetheless adhere to an ultimate source for truth and rational authority. An initial and crucial step in this direction—recognition that self-consciousness is not the sole and absolute basis for what is true and essential—is taken by the unhappy consciousness. The key to its proper education is the realization that it has harbored a flawed understanding of what it means to be an absolute and final authority.

### 3.

The attempt to make self-consciousness the final epistemic and rational authority reaches its ultimate impasse in the skeptical posture toward the world. The Skeptic demands that self-consciousness or subjectivity be the sole basis for rational authority yet is unable to escape the provinciality and contingency of her own individuality. As we have seen, she therefore refuses to confront the contradictory and practically self-refuting nature of her standpoint and accordingly perpetuates the separation between contingent and universal viewpoints. The Skeptic thus lives inauthentically—she withdraws from confronting her inescapable individuality and flees from true engagement with the world like the Stoic—or insincerely—her skepticism reverts to mere child's play. With the unhappy consciousness, so Hegel argues, a key transition occurs. Hegel writes that the unhappy consciousness is a doubling (*Verdoppelung*) of self-consciousness, that it is aware of its dual nature and, significantly, that this duplication of self-consciousness is the crucial initial step toward the emergence of an intersubjective and communal basis for ultimate rational authority (*Geist*).<sup>24</sup> The third component of this claim is bold and seems, at least initially, incongruent with Hegel's analysis of historical Christianity (an analysis to which Feuerbach and Nietzsche were so indebted), which he describes as the historical embodiment of the unhappy consciousness. I think, however, that Hegel means something like this: the unhappy consciousness is the first form of consciousness to recognize perspicuously both the distinction between

individual and universal claims to rational authority and the requirement for a stable unity or harmony between the two. Its key insight is the recognition that its own individual self-consciousness cannot be the source of that authority and thus cannot be the basis for the harmony of universal and particular perspectives. This does not mean, however, that the unhappy consciousness knows initially that no individual per se can provide the basis for the required unity, but only that any individual self-consciousness can see clearly that *he or she* cannot be that self-consciousness. From the start, therefore, the unhappy consciousness still retains the expectation that some individual can—and indeed does—have a universal, *sub specie aeternitatis* perspective. She knows only that she is not it. Herein lies the true obstacle to the development of what Hegel calls Spirit (*Geist*), namely, the assumption that the universal epistemic standpoint is a view from nowhere or that the source for rational authority is absolute. On the other hand, the fact that the unhappy consciousness recognizes the requirement that rational authority must be a harmony of perspectives and that that unity must be something objective marks the first yet crucial step toward a communal foundation for truth and rational authority. In sum, although the unhappy consciousness recognizes the requirement for a harmony of perspectives, it harbors a false assumption, namely, that the unity of perspectives must be grounded in a singular, isolated, and universal perspective, one whose universality is characterized precisely by its singularity and lack of social location. This false assumption thus involves the error of a false objectivity. Once the unhappy consciousness learns, through its experience as a form of consciousness, that this assumption is inconsistent with its self-understanding as a self-conscious individual—that is, once it recognizes that (1) its experience as self-consciousness contradicts (2) what it takes as the Absolute (and how it construes what is absolute)—it can complete the transition to an understanding of truth and rational authority that is based upon a communal foundation for truth and authority.

As we have seen, the unhappy consciousness is a divided self-consciousness. It affirms paradoxically that the final source for epistemic and rational authority is embodied in an absolute individual while

equally averring that neither itself nor any *particular* self-consciousness can be that absolute individual. Accordingly, the unhappy consciousness unsurprisingly relinquishes its claim to determine what is ultimately rationally authoritative, construes itself as a mere individual (*Einzelnen*) with simply a particularized standpoint, and projects universality onto a fictitious individual who uniquely possesses the universal and absolute standpoint. The absolute standpoint is thus a psychological construction designed to resolve a contradiction within the nature of the unhappy consciousness *as a form of self-consciousness*. The unhappy consciousness maintains that final epistemic and rational authority resides within self-consciousness, yet it knows that its own perspective or claim as a self-conscious *individual* is contingent and particularized. Given that it also holds that the universal standpoint is a singular, 'God's eye' view, the conclusion that the universal standpoint resides in an absolute individual whose perspective is free of the contingency of particularity is a natural one. Hegel, of course, contends that such a perspective is illusory and, as a foundation for epistemic authority allegedly underwriting our knowledge-claims, contradicts our experience within what Joseph Flay calls the natural standpoint. The recognition of this contradiction and the way it is to be resolved is the primary educational experience of the unhappy consciousness and the initial transition to a communal foundation for truth and rational authority.

The unhappy consciousness attempts to resolve the contradiction between universal and particular perspectives within self-consciousness by grounding the universal standpoint in an absolute, non-particularized perspective. Ostensibly from this standpoint one would have immediate access to the absolute source for epistemic and rational authority. Hegel thus maintains that within this standpoint that which is essential (*das Wesen*) is the 'simple unchangeable' (*das einfache Unwandelbare*). The task then is to leave behind the particularity of one's perspective and elevate oneself to that of the universal. Any individual self-consciousness, however, quickly discovers the particularity with which his self-consciousness is clothed cannot be removed. Any allegedly successful attempt to attain the universal perspective would remain his *own* and thereby retain its ineradicable contingency and particularity. Hegel writes:

In its elevation from here it [individuality] goes over into the Unchangeable. But this elevation is itself *this* consciousness and is thus directly consciousness of opposition, namely, of itself as individuality. The Unchangeable, which enters consciousness, is thereby affected at the same time by individuality and is present with it. Instead of having eliminated individuality in consciousness of the Unchangeable, it [this consciousness] always proceeds only within individuality.<sup>25</sup>

Self-consciousness therefore cannot transcend its particularity and attain a perspective *sub specie aeternitatis*. Such an absolute standpoint remains perpetually elusive, since any concrete, individual perspective is always socially located. Rather than recognize that the absolute standpoint is simply an abstraction, a view from nowhere and thus a view of no-thing, the unhappy consciousness, as Hegel describes it, reverts to the epistemological standpoint of mere consciousness and presumes to *receive* the properly universal perspective or claim to authority from the Absolute itself. In this respect, the unhappy consciousness is embodied in historical Christianity.<sup>26</sup> In the religion of early and then traditional Christianity, Hegel observes, God *alone* is the source of all that is true and good and as such remains always utterly beyond any human cognition or moral endeavor. Since self-consciousness, as a form of consciousness, requires that one think the Absolute in terms of self-consciousness (and here as a self-conscious individual), the unhappy consciousness thus thinks of the Absolute as a theological Absolute, a supreme individual self-consciousness whose singular, universal perspective provides the foundation for truth and rational authority.

The unhappy consciousness's reversion from the standpoint of self-consciousness to consciousness is important as well as inherently contradictory. And yet it is thoroughly consistent with the commitment to a singular, God's eye perspective as the foundation for what is rationally authoritative. If one takes oneself as incapable of making a universal claim and then invests all universality in a unique and absolute individual perspective, one thereby relinquishes one's claim to determine in any way what has final rational authority. One can only submit to that authority and attempt to get at its universalized

perspective embodied in that absolute viewpoint. At the same time, the phenomenological observer who is following the dialectic of the unhappy consciousness can discern clearly the contradictory nature of a God's eye perspective that is equally individual, that is, an *individual* standpoint that is a view from nowhere. How, that is, can an epistemic and rational standpoint be truly individually instantiated without being individualized? With his detailed description of the frustrations of the unhappy consciousness, Hegel is attempting to show that the God's eye standpoint is simply an abstraction. More precisely, it is a construction that attempts to resolve a contradiction within self-consciousness whose source is a conflation of the concept of a universal, objective perspective and an absolute, God's eye view. For this reason, the unhappy consciousness cannot detect the harmony between its individual and contingent claim to authority and the universal standard for authority.<sup>27</sup> And yet the unhappy consciousness's endeavor to alleviate its frustration, namely, the frustration of gaining access to an absolute and objective rational standard, leads directly to its breakthrough realization that the universal standard is mediated. And if some concrete individual can mediate universality, why not anyone? If anyone, why not everyone in an intersubjective and communal tradition? From here it would not be a leap to conclude that rational authority and truth (what we take as truth) have their foundation in communal consensus, without reducing truth itself to communal consensus. What we take as rationally authoritative would be determined by communal consensus, and we would adhere to that epistemic and rational authority so long as it successfully underwrites our knowledge-claims.

The unhappy consciousness aspires to secure a basic unity (*Einssein*) between its particular standpoint and the universal perspective represented by the unchangeable. By adopting the posture of consciousness toward the unchangeable, the unhappy consciousness presupposes that all objectivity, and thus all authority, resides in the unchangeable. Hegel demonstrates that this strategy fails in two respects. First, altering one's stance toward the foundation for objectivity and universality from self-consciousness to consciousness does not solve the problem of the elusiveness of the unchangeable. Rather,

it only re-enforces that elusiveness and does so within the experience of the unhappy consciousness, who eventually concludes that she can acquire the universal standpoint only as a gift she must receive. Second, stripping oneself of all claims to rational authority, and thus presupposing that all objectivity and authority is grounded in a singular, absolute perspective, is a fundamentally impossible and, indeed, self-refuting exercise. Just as the unhappy consciousness recognizes that any claims he made to obtain a universal perspective would remain nonetheless his particular perspective (and thus not universal), she can also discern that her projection of all authority onto the unchangeable is something *she* does. Even if she maintains that all rational authority resides in an absolute individual, she discovers that *she* has taken the Unchangeable to have that authority. The claims of self-consciousness cannot be relinquished and one practically refutes oneself in the very attempt to revert to the epistemological standpoint of a merely conscious individual.

Take the problem of the elusiveness of the absolute standpoint, the problem to which Hegel devotes the most attention. Since the unhappy consciousness assumes that genuine claims to objectivity and universality are grounded exclusively in a singular perspective, that absolute perspective takes the form of a sensuous object to which the unhappy consciousness is thus passively related in its supposed cognition of that object.<sup>28</sup> In this form, however, the absolute or objective standpoint is not something that the unhappy consciousness can determine, and for this reason the unchangeable remains perpetually elusive. Unity or harmony with the other requires that one be able to determine the other in some respect (as well as being opened to be determined by the other), and this is precisely what the unhappy consciousness cannot do when it takes the unchangeable as an absolute 'thing'. In this form, as Hegel describes it, the objective perspective is like "an opaque sensible unit with all the standoffishness of something actual."<sup>29</sup> From this standpoint, a harmony of perspectives is impossible precisely because there is no final access to the universal standpoint. Any conceivable reconciliation of standpoints remains simply a vain hope.<sup>30</sup> The problem persists as well when one treats the unchangeable as an object of devotion, as the absolute per-

spective remains an "unreachable beyond" (*unerreichbare Jenseits*) and something utterly opposed (*dies Entgegengesetztes*) to individual consciousness.<sup>31</sup> Hegel writes:

Where it [the other] is sought it cannot be found, for it is to be a *Beyond*, such a one which cannot be found. It is sought as an individual [yet] is not a *universal*, thought *individuality*, not a concept but an *individual* as an object or an *actual thing*, an object of immediate sense certainty and for this reason only one which has vanished. It thus becomes present to consciousness as the *tomb* of its life.<sup>32</sup>

The absolute perspective remains elusive precisely because there is no communal or universal (*all-gemein*) access to it. The relation between particular and universal perspectives is simply one between two isolated individuals who share no communal space within which to interact. On the other hand, the unhappy consciousness cannot escape the freedom of self-consciousness, namely, that any rational authority to which it might submit is an authority that *it takes to be authoritative*. As we have seen, the attempt to strip oneself of all claim to rational authority is self-refuting simply because the act itself is something that one freely does.

As we have noted, Hegel interprets historical Christianity as the paradigm of the unhappy consciousness. The Christian consciousness takes God as the sole and final source of all that is true and good and, accordingly, adopts the posture of self-denial and submissiveness before the self-giving grace of the divine. And yet the posture of praise (*Danken*), which instantiates the relation of self-denial before the sole source of truth and authority, is consciousness's own act and therefore confronts and *opposes* the self-giving grace of God. An act of praise is still one's own act.<sup>33</sup> Similarly, complete self-renunciation (for instance, in the claim that in all good deeds God alone is active) is practically self-refuting precisely because the act of self-renunciation is also one's own act and thereby an affirmation of the authority, however minimal, of one's particular existence. Hegel writes:

[F]or only therein does the fraud vanish, which lies in the inner recognition of thankfulness through heart, soul, and mind, a recognition



that absolves itself of all power of being-for-self and ascribes everything to a gift from above, but in this absolving of itself maintains external possession in the things which it does not relinquish, the internal possession in the consciousness of the decision which it has made itself and in the consciousness of its content which it has itself determined, which it has not exchanged for an alien, senseless fulfilment.<sup>34</sup>

The failure of self-renunciation as a strategy to gain access to the unchangeable and its objective and universal standpoint arises, as we have seen, from the unhappy consciousness' assumption that the unchangeable represents an isolated and thus inaccessible God's eye view. This specific experience of the unchangeable's inaccessibility leads, so Hegel contends, to the key transition into the recognition of a communal basis for rational authority. Once the unhappy consciousness confronts the extremity of the elusiveness of the absolute standpoint, he concludes that this standpoint is obtainable only through the mediation of another particular self-consciousness. The dynamics of this interplay between the unhappy consciousness, the unchangeable, and its mediator is mirrored, according to Hegel, in the experience of the early Christian Church. As Hegel points out, the early Church emerged within the social and political context of Roman despotism, at a time after the disintegration of the Roman republic when even Roman citizens were becoming increasingly alienated from the social world they inhabited. Early Christianity reflects that social context and thus it is unsurprising that their conception of God as the sole yet remote source of all rational and religious authority would reflect their experience of oppression. Their experience of divine absence from their social milieu was so pronounced that they could experience the divine presence only through a priest/mediator.<sup>35</sup> For Hegel, the realization by the unhappy consciousness that the ultimate source of rational authority—the universal and objective perspective—can be mediated by another individual self-consciousness is utterly decisive, and it is not difficult to see why. If one reflects on the necessary presuppositions underwriting the claim that some individual self-consciousness mediates the universal perspective, one can see that those presuppositions involve a commitment to a communal foundation for final rational authority.

Consider first that the mediator of the universal standpoint is an individual self-consciousness, one whose particular claim to rational authority is equally contingent. Therefore if one accedes to the authority of the mediator, one does not relinquish altogether one's claim to authority and one recognizes that there is no absolute finality to the claim of the mediator. Her claim to mediate the universal perspective remains *her* claim, even though she is recognized as genuinely mediating the universal standpoint. Also consider that the role of mediator is not restricted to this specific individual (there are numerous priests and saints). In short, there is no inherent obstacle to anyone's being a mediator of the universal perspective. And, just as the early Church took the priesthood as a communal whole to be the mediator of divine presence, the Lutheran Hegel would readily admit anyone and thus everyone into the special class as mediator of the objective standpoint. The posture toward the mediator is pivotal for the transition within the experience of the unhappy consciousness to a communal foundation for rational authority, for it allows individual self-consciousness to relinquish the absoluteness of its own claim without thereby projecting an absolute claim onto another. In this sense, as Hegel indicates, something positive emerges in one's self-renunciation, namely, that "the positing of a will as the will of another, and determinately not of an individual will but of a universal will."<sup>36</sup> A community of mediators (for Hegel, the 'priesthood of all believer') provides precisely the communal foundation for rational authority for which Hegel has argued implicitly in the entire Self-Consciousness chapter. Once the unhappy consciousness discerns the necessary conditions that make mediation of the universal standpoint possible, she has made the initial transition to spirit. She is no longer "unhappy" since the objective and universal standpoint is both a perspective to which she has access and to which she can contribute. She retains her basic nature as self-consciousness—she accepts as rationally authoritative only what she takes to be rationally authoritative—while relinquishing her claim to possess an absolute perspective. In short, she has made the requisite transition precisely because she has learned that the source of her error and the source of the contradictions in her efforts to render her own perspective universal and objective was the

harboring of a false Absolute, namely, the God's eye standpoint. Discarding the God's eye view enables her to amend (1) her view of the Absolute, (2) her self-understanding as self-consciousness, and thereby (3) her stance toward what she takes to be true and essential. She now recognizes the possibility of a communal basis for a universal and necessary standpoint, that what one takes to be true, essential, universal, and objective is a communal consensus that forms a living social tradition. The tradition is a living one precisely because it amends itself when inconsistencies between what it takes to be universal and objective become inconsistent with its experience of knowing in everyday life. What is universal, objective, and true *in se* remains independent of communal consensus, yet what one takes as the universal standpoint is the result of intersubjective and communal agreement. As long as the product of intersubjective agreement successfully underwrites one's claim to knowledge and is consistent with the experience of knowing, one's conclusion that one has attained an objective standpoint will be justified.

I have attempted to demonstrate that Hegel makes a *prima facie* case in the *Unhappy Consciousness* section of the *Self-Consciousness* chapter for a communal foundation for ultimate rational authority. The case is preliminary, precisely because Hegel simply shows in that section that the resolution of the contradictions within the epistemic experience of the unhappy consciousness can be resolved only by adopting a communal foundation for final rational authority. It does not thereby provide a completed argument for such a theory of rational authority. The completed argument embraces the Reason chapter and involves further education for self-consciousness, which no longer views itself as an isolated pseudo-universal but a contributing member of an intersubjective community. The transition to a communal foundation, as I have attempted to show, requires that self-consciousness seriously revise its conception of a universal and objective perspective. That revision—the substitution of a theological Absolute for a communal tradition, a standpoint *sub specie aeternitatis* for a communally mediated universality—is the primary education of the unhappy consciousness.

## NOTES

1. Hegel, *Phänomenologie des Geistes*, in *Werke* 3 (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp Verlag, 1970), p. 138. Hereafter cited as W3. All translations are mine.

2. See Terry Pinkard, *Hegel's Phenomenology: The Sociality of Reason* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994). I have profited significantly from Pinkard's fine book.

3. W3, p. 72.

4. By "theological" Absolute, I mean a reality consistent with the God of traditional theism, i.e., one of whose primary attributes is its aseity. This, then, would be consistent with Schelling's Absolute of the philosophy of identity and the *Ungrund* of the *Freedom Essay*, Fichte's Absolute of the post-Jena philosophy, and Schleiermacher's God, who, as sketched in the lectures on dialectic, transcends both thinking and being. According to my interpretation, which I present in the course of this chapter, Hegel does not start with the notion that the Absolute is God and then interpret Absolute Spirit accordingly. Rather, when turning to religion as understood through the perspective of *Geist*, he interprets religion from the perspective of Absolute Spirit as the social and communal tradition, to whose institutions one commits oneself and contributes, and which is the final authority for what one takes to be true and rationally authoritative.

5. My overall argument admittedly makes a controversial assumption, namely, as Michael Forster has argued, that the core of the argument of the *Phenomenology* is completed with the Reason chapter and that the Spirit, Religion, and Absolute Knowing chapters offer interpretations from the perspective of what has been established by the end of the Reason chapter. Forster's interpretation is controversial, and I will not offer any independent arguments here to support it. See Michael N. Forster, *Hegel's Idea of a Phenomenology of Spirit* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992).

6. Cf. Ulrich Claesges: "The self-consciousness of self-completing skepticism is identical with emerging science, which examines all truth claims in comparison with it and through this presentation determines itself continuously toward absolute knowing." ("Das Selbstbewusstsein des sich vollbringenden Skeptizismus ist identisch mit der auftretenden Wissenschaft, die alle neben ihr vorhandenen Wahrheitsansprüche 'skeptisch' überprüft und durch diese Darstellung sich selbst zum absoluten Wissen fortbestimmt.") Claesges, "Das Doppelgesicht des Skeptizismus in Hegels *Phänomenologie des Geistes*," in *Skeptizismus und spekulatives Denken in der*

*Philosophie Hegels*, ed. Hans Friedrich Fulda and Rolf-Peter Horstmann (Stuttgart: Kett-Cota, 1996), p. 134.

7. W3, p. 73. "Der sich auf den ganzen Umfang des erscheinenden Bewusstseins richtende Skeptizismus macht dagegen den Geist erst geschickt zuprüfen was Wahrheit ist."

8. "[I]t is that point wherein [consciousness] no longer has the need to proceed beyond itself, where it finds *itself*, and concept agrees with object and object with concept" (W3, p. 74, emphasis mine). ("[E]s ist das, wo es nicht mehr über sich selbst hinausgehen nötig hat, wo es sich selbst findet und der Begriff dem Gegenstande, der Gegenstand dem Begriffe entspricht.")

9. Joseph Flay, *Hegel's Quest for Certainty* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1984).

10. For a more comprehensive discussion, see Kenneth Westphal, *Hegel's Epistemological Realism* (Dordrecht: Kluwer, 1989); Joseph Flay, *Quest for Certainty*; and Robert Williams, "Hegel and Transcendental Philosophy," *Journal of Philosophy* 82, no. 2 (December 1985): 595–606.

11. W3, pp. 162–63. "Aber es hält diesen Widerspruch seiner selbst auseinander und verhält sich darüber wie in seiner rein negativen Bewegung überhaupt. Wird ihm die Gleichheit aufgezeigt, so zeigt es die Ungleichheit auf; und indem ihm diese, die es eben ausgesprochen hat, jetzt vorhalten wird, so geht es zum Aufzeigen der Gleichheit über; sein Gerede ist in der Tat ein Gezänke eingensinniger Jungen, deren einer A sagt, wenn der andere B, und wieder B, wenn der andere A, und die sich durch den Widerspruch mit sich selbst, die Freude erkaufen, miteinander im Widerspruch zu bleiben." Compare this passage from the Introduction; "[T]his vanity, which understands itself as preventing any truth, turning back from the truth and into itself and gloating over this its understanding, which knows how to dissolve all thoughts and to find, instead of all content, only the barren self, is a satisfaction which must be left to itself for it flees from the universal and seeks only a being-for-self." ("[D]iese Eitelkeit, welche sich jede Wahrheit zu vereiteln, daraus in sich zurückzukehren versteht und an diesen eigenen Verstand sich wendet, der alle Gedanken immer aufzulösen und statt alles Inhalts nur das trochene ich zu finden weiss, ist eine Befriedigung, welche sich selbst überlassen werden muss; denn sie flieht das Allgemeine und sucht nur das Fürsichsein." W3, p. 75.)

12. *Equipollence* refers to the strategy of ancient skeptics who attempted to show that for any argument supporting a given proposition an equally strong argument could be given to refute that proposition. The overall strategy, of course, was to generate a suspension of judgment.

13. See Sextus Empiricus, *Outlines of Pyrrhonism*, trans. R. G. Bury (London: Loeb Classical Library, 1976), chap. 4.

14. K. L. Reinhold, *The Foundation of Philosophical Knowledge*. Trans. George di Giovanni and H. S. Harris (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1985), p. 70.

15. W3, p. 76.

16. For a fine, detailed discussion of Hegel's coherence analysis of truth, see Westphal, *Realism*. Note that Westphal stresses correctly that Hegel's procedure is not subjective: "Because the world for consciousness and knowledge for consciousness . . . result from consciousness' application of its conception of the world and of knowledge . . . to the world itself and to knowledge itself . . . , the world itself and knowledge itself figure centrally into the world and knowledge for consciousness. . . . Because the world itself and knowledge itself figure centrally into the world and knowledge for consciousness, if the world and knowledge for consciousness coincide with consciousness' conception of the world and knowledge, then these conceptions also coincide with their objects, the world itself and knowledge itself (pp. 108–109).

17. Literally, the other is designated *mit Charakter des Negativen* (W3, p. 139).

18. The lord must recognize the serf even if it is to recognize him as the one that accedes to the lord's ultimate authority as the final authority.

19. Thomas Nagel, *The View from Nowhere* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986).

20. W3, p. 159. "[D]ass das Bewusstsein denkendes Wesen ist und etwas nur Wesenheit für dasselben hat oder wahr und gut für es ist, als das Bewusstsein sich darin als denkendes Wesen verhält."

21. Michael Hardimon, "Skepticism, Speculation, and Guidance: Hegel on the Pyrrhonian Guide to Action," in Fulda and Hostmann, *Skeptizismus* p. 268. Hardimon writes: "Moreover, the central skeptical practice, critical inquiry, consists in the private, internal activity of constructing opposing arguments *for oneself*" (p. 268). As Hardimon observes, it is unsurprising that the Skeptic would take *atarxia* as the highest good.

22. Jean-Claude Bourdin has noted that Enlightenment rationality (in its French version), as Hegel reads it, is simply a variant of this deficient form of skepticism. The critique of Enlightenment rationality thus simply repeats a similar argument against skepticism. Bourdin writes: "Thus, the identity between this type of activity of the concept and its negative activity explains why pure thinking has no proper content, but only a content given to it by

its controversial connection with its other. Put differently, it has only a content that is subordinate and derived, relative to its dispute.” (“Or, l’identité entre ce type d’activité du concept et son activité négative explique que la pure intellection n’a pas eu de contenu propre mais qu’elle n’a su s’en donner que dans et par son rapport polémique à son autre, autrement dit que son contenu n’a été qu’un contenu subordonné, dérivé, relatif à ses polémiques.”) Bourdin, “La Figure du scepticisme dans l’intellection (die Einsicht) des Lumières,” in Fulda and Horstmann, *Skeptizismus* p. 92.

23. W3, p. 162. “[E]s spricht das absolute Verschwinden aus, aber das Aussprechen ist, und dies Bewusstsein ist das ausgesprochene Verschwinden; es spricht die Nichtigkeit des Sehens, Hörens, usf. aus, und es *sieht, hört*, usf. *sich* . . .” (emphasis Hegel’s).

24. W3, p. 163.

25. W3, p. 165. “Es geht in der Erhebung hieraus zum Unwandelbaren über. Aber dieser Erhebung ist selbst dies Bewusstsein; sie ist also unmittelbar das Bewusstsein des Gegenteils, nämlich seiner selbst also der Einzelheit. Das Unwandelbare, das in das Bewusstsein tritt, ist ebenda dadurch zugleich von der Einzelheit berührt und mit dieser gegenwärtig; statt diese im Bewusstsein des Unwandelbaren vertilgt zu haben, geht sie darin immer nur hervor.”

26. Note the following passages from *The Positivity of the Christian Religion*: “Reason could never give up finding practical principles, the absolute and self-sufficient reality, somewhere or other; but these were no longer to be met with in man’s will. They now showed themselves in the deity proffered by the Christian religion, a deity beyond the reach of our powers and our will but not of our supplications and prayers” (*Early Theological Writings*, trans. T. M. Knox (University of Pennsylvania Press, 1975), p. 158. And, note particularly: “The right of legislation was ceded to God exclusively, but not content with this, men looked to him for every good impulse, every better purpose and decision. These were regarded as his work, not in the sense in which the Stoics ascribed every good thing to the deity because they thought of their souls as sparks of the divine or as generated by God, but as the work of a being outside us in whom we have no part, a being foreign to us with whom we have nothing in common” (*Early Theological Writings*, p. 160).

27. “But it is not *for it* [the Unhappy Consciousness] that this its object, the Unchangeable, which has for it essentially the form of individuality, is *itself*, [that] it itself is the individuality of consciousness” (PhG, p. 168, emphasis Hegel’s). (“Aber es ist nicht *für es*, dass dieser sein Gegen-

stand, das Unwandelbare, welches ihm wesentlich die Gestalt der Einzelheit hat, *es selbst* ist, es selbst, das Einzelheit des Bewusstseins ist").

28. W3, pp. 167–68.

29. W3, p. 166. "[A]ls ein undurchsichtiges sinnliches *Eins* mit der ganzen Sprödigkeit eines *Wirklichen* . . . ."

30. W3, pp. 166–67.

31. W3, p. 169.

32. W3, p. 169 (emphasis Hegel's). "Wo es gesucht werde, kann es nicht gefunden werden; dann es soll eben ein *Jenseits*, ein solches sein, welches nicht gefunden werden kann. Es als Einzelnes gesucht, ist nicht eine *allgemeine*, gedachte *Einzelheit*, nicht Begriff, sondern *Einzelnes* als Gegenstand oder ein *Wirkliches*; Gegenstand der unmittelbaren sinnlichen Gewisheit und eben darum nur ein solches, welches verschwunden ist. Dem Bewusstsein kann daher nur das Grab seines Lebens zur Gegenwart konnen."

33. "Likewise, its [consciousness's] *offering of praise*, wherein it recognizes the other extreme as what is essential and eliminates itself, is itself *its own* act, which counter-balances the act of the other extreme and places against the self-sacrificing beneficence the *same* act" (W3, p. 172, emphasis Hegel's). "Sein *Danken* ebenso, worin es das ander Extrem also das Wesen anerkennt und sich aufhebt, ist selbst *sein eigenes* Tat, welches das Tat des andern Extrems aufwiegt und der sich preisgebenden Wohl Tat ein *gleiches* Tun entgegenstellt."

34. W3, p. 176. "[D]enn nur in ihr verschwindet der Betrug, welcher in dem inneren Anerkennen des Danken durch Herz, Gesinnung, und Mund liegt, einem Anerkennen, welches zwar alle Macht des Fürsichseins von sich abwälzt und sie einem Geben von oben zuschreibt, aber in diesem Abwälzen selbst sich die äussere Eigenheit in dem Besitze, den es nicht aufgibt, die innere aber in dem Bewusstsein des Entschlusses, den es selbst gefasst, und in dem Bewusstsein seines durch es bestimmten Inhalts, den es nicht gegen einen fremden, es sinnlos erfüllenden ungetauscht hat, behält."

35. Compare the early Christian social and political context with that of the Greeks and that of republican Rome: "As free men the Greeks and the Romans obeyed laws laid down by themselves, obeyed men whom they had themselves appointed to office, waged wars on which they had themselves decided, gave their property, exhausted their passions, and sacrificed their lives by thousands for an end which was their own. They neither learned nor taught [a moral system] but evinced by their actions the moral maxims which they could call their very own. In public as in private and domestic



life, every individual was a free man, one who lived by his own laws. The idea of his country and of his state was the invisible or higher reality for which he strove, which impelled him to effort; it was the final end of *his* world, an end which he found manifested in the realities of his daily life or which he himself co-operated in manifesting and maintaining. Confronted by this idea, his own individuality vanished; it was only the idea's maintenance, life, and persistence that he asked for, and these were things which he himself could make realities" (*Early Theological Writings*, p. 154, emphasis Hegel's).

36. W3, p. 176. The complete passage reads as follows: "For the renunciation of one's own will is only in one sense negative, but at the same time according to *its concept* or *in itself* positive, namely, the positing of a will as the will of *another*, and determinately not of an individual will but a universal will" (emphasis Hegel's). "Denn das Aufgeben des eigenen Willens ist nur einerseits negativ, *seinem Begriffe* nach oder *an sich*, zugleich aber positiv, nämlich das Setzen des Willens als eines *Anderen* und bestimmt des Willens als eines nicht einzelnen, sondern allgemeinen."



# HEGEL ON FORGIVENESS

KLAUS BRINKMANN

Hegel's treatment of forgiveness in the *Phenomenology of Spirit* is interesting for several reasons. First, it constitutes the common endpoint of two extended lines of argument, the one beginning with the *Phenomenology's* chapter on Self-Consciousness, the other with its chapter on Spirit. That is to say, on the one hand, it marks the emergence of the 'We' that the reader had been waiting for since the initial confrontation of two self-consciousnesses,<sup>1</sup> and, on the other, it accentuates the emergence of the notion of that concrete spirituality which Greek ethical life, Roman legalism, the Enlightenment period, and the moral worldview were unable to achieve.<sup>2</sup> Second, forgiveness represents a unique moral standpoint in Hegel's system. For while the moral standpoint of conscience, of which forgiveness forms the final dialectical result, has a parallel in the *Philosophy of Right* at the juncture of the transition from morality to *Sittlichkeit*—the ethical life of the modern world—forgiveness does not reappear there. Instead, in the *Philosophy of Right* we go directly from conscience to the institutions of the family, society, and the state, whereas in the *Phenomenology* the transition is from conscience via

forgiveness to religion. Because of the partial parallelism between these transitions, it is an intriguing task in and of itself to try to explain the underlying rationale for their divergent outcomes. Third, forgiveness is also a comment on the inadequacy of morality as a basis for communal life. However, despite the fact that the transition from conscience to religion seems to parallel closely that of conscience to the ethical life, the 'verdict' on morality implied in the two cases is not the same. A comparison of the two transitions shows that while morality is indeed completely 'overcome' by religion, the same is not true of the ethical life. In it, morality retains a significant role, albeit one systematically transformed (and to a certain extent also downplayed) by Hegel.

In view of the similarities and differences between the two transitions, I propose to examine the question what kind of verdict may be implied on the nature of morality in either case, why forgiveness is absent in the transition to the ethical life, and what its presence in the transition to religion ultimately amounts to. As a corollary, I raise the question of what kind of ethics Hegel thinks to be adequate within the context of the ethical life. I begin with a brief recapitulation of the main points of Hegel's treatment of the moral worldview, conscience, and forgiveness in the *Phenomenology*. Next, I examine the transition from forgiveness to religion and, following that, I examine the transition from conscience to the ethical life in the *Philosophy of Right* and comment on the role left there for morality and conscience to play.

## I. FROM THE MORAL WORLDVIEW TO FORGIVENESS

According to Hegel, the moral attitude called 'conscience' results from the internal contradictions of the moral worldview.<sup>3</sup> Hegel's analysis of the moral worldview takes Kant's moral philosophy as its object. Kant's deontological position had already been the subject of critical scrutiny earlier in the *Phenomenology* under the title "Reason as Testing Laws" in the final section of the chapter on Reason.<sup>4</sup>

Hegel's assessment there had issued in the notorious charge of formalism against the universalizability principle. The chapter on Reason generally had dealt with the ability of individual consciousness to pose as the representative of universal reason. In the chapter entitled Spirit, in which the subsections "The Moral View of the World"<sup>5</sup> and "Dissemblance or Duplicity"<sup>6</sup> occur, the situation is reversed. Now the priority of universal reason over the individual is acknowledged, and the question is whether the individual is capable of living up to the demands of that reason. Hegel here addresses the meta-ethical basis of Kant's moral philosophy as it is defined by the solution to the Third Antinomy in the First *Critique's* Dialectic.<sup>7</sup> There Kant commits himself to an unbridgeable gap between nature and freedom while also requiring that their 'harmony' be at least logically non-contradictory. However, in the *Critique of Practical Reason*, he must further envision the possibility of a complementarity between happiness and the worthiness to be happy because otherwise the injunction to develop a good will would be tantamount to requiring the impossible, i.e., to develop a holy will. Consequently, reason must give sensibility and inclination their due. On the other hand, because of the persisting incompatibility of duty and inclination in any concrete act of self-determination, the realization of complementing worthiness with happiness (the so-called highest good), must be deferred indefinitely. Rightly or wrongly, in his analysis of the Kantian doctrine of postulates, Hegel exploits the ensuing conundrum of a will that must strive to be worthy of happiness but must never become so worthy. The result is that Kantian morality itself becomes a mere postulate, a moral philosophy no consciousness can seriously adopt.<sup>8</sup>

In the transition to conscience, the underlying issue again comes to the fore. If, as Hegel believes, his critique of Kantian deontological ethics has shown, the individual can never satisfy the demands of practical reason as long as the duty it is required to fulfil must remain absolutely pure, i.e., unaffected by interest, desire, and inclination, then duty must be made compatible with human sensibility. Inclinations and desires must be capable of constituting grounds for the determination of the will without the individual will losing its potential to be an expression of universal reason. The result, Hegel argues,

is the moral standpoint of conscience. In it, the will of the individual sanctions any particular action as being done from duty, the rationale being that conscience has certified any given motive as being morally unexceptionable or even noble. An action is then held to be morally good because it is grounded in a morally impeccable conscience. Unlike deontological consciousness, conscience in fact sets an example of what it means to act morally. It is, of course, crucial for this position that conscience is the final arbiter of the morality of its actions, and that there can be no higher court of appeal. The morality of an action thus rests on the agent's say-so, this being the price to pay for making particular motivations for action the immediate expressions of duty.<sup>9</sup>

Now since conscience represents an instance of singularized universality, it also has an aspect of 'being-for-another,' and thus likewise a 'being-for-itself' which exhibits an exteriority over against another singular conscience.<sup>10</sup> An external difference opens up between one conscience and another conscience. Simultaneously, an internal difference emerges between the universality of conscientious consciousness as the certifier of duty and the particularity of its motives for action. Furthermore, while the individual action is indeed supposed not only to be in conformity with duty but to be done from duty, the idea of duty as an abstract justificatory principle has by no means disappeared. Others who observe an individual action of conscience know that duty, too, is multifaceted, depending on the circumstances, and that what may seem to be an action done from duty from the standpoint of one consciousness need not appear to be so from the standpoint of another. In fact, it may seem to be done merely in conformity with duty, in which case the universal and the individual would once again appear to be separate—the opposite of a conscientious action. To avoid this potential difference of opinion—soon to reemerge, however—between the acting and the observing consciousness, the acting consciousness must declare its action to be motivated by duty, i.e., it must state its belief in the moral goodness of its own act with conviction. Conversely, the observing consciousness must accept this "assurance" as truthful.<sup>11</sup> This granted, the identity of particular action and idiosyncratic motivation on the one

hand and the principle of duty on the other is preserved through an element of mutual trust. Everybody expects the other consciousness to be trustworthy and truthful in its assertions and nobody has reason to suspect otherwise.<sup>12</sup>

Unfortunately, according to Hegel, this situation cannot last, the celebrating of general righteousness and the worshipping of "moral genius" are short-lived.<sup>13</sup> But note that consciousness has now achieved, and for the first time, an ethical community. The individual selves are each for themselves what the community is as a whole, that is, a self-acknowledging, self-determined identity of the individual and the universal, consciously granting each other their self-validating status.<sup>14</sup> However, we can also already see what is still missing from this shape of consciousness for it to qualify as a genuine spiritual community. The self-validation of each conscience is only abstractly acknowledged as conferring moral goodness on an action while the motives as such are not. Motives may or may not be morally acceptable depending on the situation, and hence an action may still be done from duty or merely in conformity with duty.

No stable moral community can result from this configuration. Accordingly, Hegel lets this "divine worship of a community"<sup>15</sup> deteriorate relatively quickly into a state of ubiquitous hypocrisy, universal second-guessing of motivation, bitter moralizing, and mutual contempt, in short, into a state of evil.<sup>16</sup> And yet, one might want to speculate why Hegel accords this community of moral saints a separate stage in the dialectic of morality at all. My conjecture is that he wanted to show the untenability, indeed the artificiality, of a Kantian kingdom of ends, or alternatively of Kant's idea of an ethical community as envisioned in the *Religion within the Limits of Reason Alone*.<sup>17</sup> It is in the kingdom of ends that each consciousness is considered to be not only a potential but also an actual universal law-giver. To be sure, according to Kant, in such a kingdom the agents no longer have any particular interests, inclinations, or desires that need to be sanctioned as being morally acceptable.<sup>18</sup> These agents no longer need the thought experiment prescribed by the categorical imperative. However, this does not conflict with Hegel's account of the conscientious community. For in this community, consciousness

becomes a "pure self, and thereby *a universal self*."<sup>19</sup> These selves henceforth 'rejoice' in their "mutual purity." Still, a distinction between their "abstract consciousness" and their "self-consciousness" lingers on. That is to say, these selves continue to differentiate between their individual moral goodness and the universal law (or divine purity) of which they are, so to speak, the image. Consequently, the idea of God as a lawgiver who is different from the individual conscience is retained even in this "excellent state of affairs,"<sup>20</sup> as Hegel describes it, no doubt ironically:

In so far as this conscience still distinguishes its abstract consciousness from its *self-consciousness*, it has only a *hidden* life in God. . . . Conscience knows that the abstract consciousness is just this self, this being-for-itself that is certain of itself, knows that it is precisely in the *immediacy* of the *relation* of the self to the *in-itself*—which when posited outside the self is an abstract God and hidden from it—that the difference is eliminated.<sup>21</sup>

This may be Hegel's way of reconstructing, within the dialectic of the for-itself and the in-itself of consciousness, the Kantian distinction between being a member and being a sovereign in the kingdom of ends. Kant says in the *Grounding*:

A rational being belongs to the kingdom of ends as a member when he legislates in it universal laws while also being himself subject to these laws. He belongs to it as sovereign, when as legislator he is himself subject to the will of no other. . . . The position of the latter can be maintained not merely through the maxims of his will but only if he is a completely independent being without needs and with unlimited power adequate to his will.<sup>22</sup>

The *necessity* of mutually recognizing everyone's power for moral self-validation is an acknowledgment of being *subject* to one's own law of requiring truthfulness in word and deed. In this community of the truthful, no one can be exempt from the requirement of mutual recognition. But precisely because of this, the requirement itself can be regarded as the essence or in-itself that holds this community



together, as its underlying law to which the individual conscience must conform. The idea of a conscience which would no longer be required to conform to the law of truthfulness in word and deed, but would rather be that conformity, would thus be the sovereign in this community of moral saints.

It is this unresolved difference between the individual's conviction of acting from duty and the remaining 'ought' of recognition that necessitates a further dialectical conflict of which the final resolution will come to pass through the act of forgiveness. The difference between the truthful individual and the universality of the requirement of recognition affects the individuals themselves in their relationship with one another and infests it with suspicion and mistrust. This 'external' difference, previously neutralized by the word of assurance, calls forth again the latent 'internal' difference within the truthful individual himself between the particular action and the arbitrariness of declaring it an action done from duty. The catalyst for this development is action. While inaction was the necessary result of the deontological consciousness,<sup>23</sup> action is a necessary element of conscience because the identity of universal duty and individual motive for action cannot be realized in any other way.<sup>24</sup> The exchanging of assurances is not enough if the law of recognition requires not only truthfulness in word and deed but agreement of word and deed, action and assurance, with one another. Consequently, the artificiality ("abstraction") of this "excellent state of affairs" in the kingdom of ends, where to act means to speak the word of assurance, must 'evaporate', along with the 'beautiful soul' which is its most refined product.<sup>25</sup> Thus,

the language in which all reciprocally acknowledge each other as acting conscientiously, this universal identity, falls apart into the non-identity of individual being-for-self: each consciousness is just as much simply reflected out of its universality into itself. As a result, the antithesis of individuality to other individuals, and to the universal, inevitably comes on the scene.<sup>26</sup>

The community of the truthful is lost by the separation of word from deed and poisoned by second-guessing the purity of the other's

motives.<sup>27</sup> The language of truthfulness becomes the language of hypocrisy; the earlier trust is turned into universal suspicion. The acting conscience knows in its heart of hearts that if any motive may be sanctioned by its say-so, the appeal to duty becomes redundant and the word of assurance arbitrary. The fact that the word of assurance must nonetheless be pronounced makes that pronouncement a mere facade.<sup>28</sup> The result is a state of hypocrisy, wickedness, and evil will. The assurance of having acted *from* duty becomes pretence and is viewed by others who judge the action as a mere external *conformity to* the law of truthfulness, i.e., as an act of deception and baseness. Hegel skillfully scripts the acrimonious confrontation between the acting and the judging conscience in the ensuing drama of the mutual nonrecognition of the self in the other.<sup>29</sup> Briefly put, each consciousness must come to the realization of its identity with the other. This requires essentially that the being-for-the-other of each—i.e., their word—be understood as the externality through which both may renounce their singularity rather than affirm it in a mutual stand-off. The word asking for forgiveness on the part of the acting conscience and the word granting forgiveness on the part of the judging conscience are precisely this. The episode of the ‘hard heart’, which intervenes between these two ‘speech acts’, is necessary because otherwise the acting conscience would be the only one in need of forgiveness. With this intermediate dialectical step, the acting conscience, too, has something to forgive the judging conscience (so that forgiveness may be reciprocal after all), and it does so by *accepting* the pardon of the latter. The deep alienation between the two consciousnesses that resulted from the earlier refusal to forgive on the part of the judging conscience is overcome because Spirit has the power to absolve, i.e., to undo what has been done. The wounds of Spirit heal “and leave no scars behind.”<sup>30</sup>

## 2. BEYOND MORALITY?

The result of the dialectic of conscience in the *Phenomenology* is the transition from the last form of Spirit called “morality” to religion as

“the universal Spirit that contains within itself all essence and all actuality,” albeit not yet in the form of “free actuality.”<sup>31</sup> Religion represents that form of Spirit in which Spirit becomes conscious of itself *as* Spirit, instead of being known only as the more or less abstract absolute being (*absolutes Wesen*) as in the previous appearances of the supersensible.<sup>32</sup> The opposition of consciousness (or subject-object divide), which the *Phenomenology* is meant to undermine and dissolve, has now all but disappeared. At this point, reality, the object (*Gegenstand*) of consciousness, is known to be itself Spirit or spiritual, and no longer the merely human law of the ancients or the despiritualized world of the Enlightenment. The further development within religion regards only the metamorphosis of this spiritual content into a shape that adequately expresses its identity with the divine, i.e., the emergence of the religious community celebrating the eternal incarnation of God in human form. The act of reconciliation through mutual forgiveness gives birth to this development:

The reconciling Yea, in which the two I's let go their antithetical *existence* (*Dasein*), is the existence of the 'I' which has expanded into a duality, and therein remains identical with itself, and, in its complete externalization and opposite, possesses the certainty of itself: it is God manifested in the midst of those who know themselves in the form of pure knowledge.<sup>33</sup>

There is implied in this transition a judgment about the tenability of the moral standpoint itself as well as a claim about what form of life should supersede it. I shall comment first on the transition within the *Phenomenology* from forgiveness to religion. The striking fact in this transition seems to be that morality itself is superseded by a higher standpoint. This must be understood as an overcoming of morality *per se*. Morality for Hegel is the attempt to determine the idea of the good in a universally valid form while assuming the point of view of the individual and to realize this determination through action. Thus the action should be an instantiation of the good, the 'is' which realizes the 'ought'. However, in the act of forgiveness what we forgive each other is precisely the fact that to act as well as to judge is to become guilty. The acting conscience is guilty of identifying the good

with *this* particular action or motivation or *its* particular form of life *and* the identification of action done from duty with action done merely in conformity with duty. The judging conscience, in contrast, is guilty of avoiding making a commitment to a particular motivation or form of life through inaction, and furthermore of the self-righteousness which consists in taking the act of judging to be equivalent to acting, i.e., to the commitment to particularization. Both kinds of guilt are in a sense inevitable. The acting conscience takes it upon itself to realize the good but can do so only in an idiosyncratic or, to use Kantian terminology, heteronomous fashion. The judging conscience rejects the heteronomy in order to maintain the universality of the idea of the good, which, however, becomes sterile through inaction. In the end, the trust between individuals, without which there could not be a community, let alone a moral one, is lost. Everybody suspects everybody else of being duplicitous, the moral version, so to speak, of *homo homini lupus*. (Note Hegel's skill in introducing a duplicate conscience through the distinction between the acting and the judging conscience—both are singular individuals, both are diametrically opposed to one another, but both are also conscience, thus preparing for the emergence of a community out of the earlier solitary moral consciousness.)

It seems to me that the function of the act of forgiveness is to restore the community while simultaneously acknowledging that moral ambivalence and moral guilt are inevitable. The rebuilding of the community through the act of forgiveness is achieved, however, by eliminating the particularity of the individual (as expressed, for instance, by gender, personal interest, idiosyncratic motivation, particular talent, character, or, generally, empirical naturalness). It is the particularity of the individual which is at the root of the 'antithetical' nature of the relationship between acting and judging conscience. This particularity is a necessary element in action, but in its immediacy it is likewise incommensurable with the universality of duty. Acting conscience claims its particularity to be immediately in accordance with the universal; judging conscience knows this claim to be untrue, and rightfully so, because immediate particularity is the negation of universality. Forgiveness is the radical step beyond this incom-

measurability through the sacrifice of particularity. I say sacrifice because forgiveness only anticipates the later death of the divine man and the resurrection of Christ in the Revealed Religion chapter.<sup>34</sup>

Thus the act of forgiveness overcomes the loss of moral trust not by founding a new ethical form of life in which the individual's particularity still plays an important role but by creating the nucleus of a community of individuals who know their particularity to be immaterial to their selfhood. They no longer regard each other as individuals to be judged morally at all, and consequently they no longer maintain a moral relationship with each other. Their relationship is rather one of neighborly love, charity, and unqualified good will. Forgiveness prepares the stage for a position beyond duty and morality altogether. We may still call this an *ethos*, even if it represents an ethos beyond morality. The content or 'substance' of this religious community of mutual love and trust is no longer the ethical life of family, society, and state, but the realization that from the religious point of view the individual's particularity and his inevitable finitude have in principle been redeemed and the unhappy struggle of consciousness to identify with its true essence has been laid to rest. The transubstantiation of Christ's flesh and blood into the spiritual nourishment of the religious congregation completes the transfiguration of the natural into the religious community.

There is, however, another way of rebuilding the community that preserves the element of particularity and with it the idea of the good along with that of duty. With the preservation of particularity, we inherit the need to unify the 'heteronomy' involved in acting with the universality of duty. The conflict between the two is inherent in conscience but was left unresolved by forgiveness rather than being sublated by it. Consequently, the transition from morality to *Sittlichkeit* in the *Philosophy of Right* bypasses forgiveness and instead moves from the moral conflict between acting and judging conscience to its resolution in the ethical community.<sup>35</sup> But how is the unification of duty with the natural interests, inclinations, desires, in short, with the entire heteronomous aspect of human reality, to be effected? Hegel's solution is that the ethical community creates institutions (such as families, professions, administrative and governmental bodies, and a

state claiming allegiance from its citizens) that answer to the specific needs of individuals, their particularity, but at the same time impose duties on their members or participants. The latter can still be judged individually to the extent to which they live up to the ethical demands of the institutions they belong to, and to that extent are still subject to moral judgment. However, it can be assumed that members of these institutions do by and large fulfil their duties in such a way that at the institutional level the 'ought' has indeed become the 'is', notwithstanding the fact that there will always be individual cases in which this or that member of the institution either fails to meet the ethical requirements or surpasses them, as the case may be.<sup>36</sup> What Hegel here advocates is an institutionally based virtue ethics reminiscent of the ancients,<sup>37</sup> in which moral judgment takes the form of praise and blame in accordance with one's fulfillment or neglect of objective duties.<sup>38</sup> The laws, customs, and institutions of a political community

are duties binding on the will of the individual, because as subjective, as inherently undetermined, or determined as particular, he distinguishes himself from them and hence stands related to them as to the substance of his own being.<sup>39</sup>

Hegel's ethics, in which virtue is defined as "the ethical order reflected in the individual character so far as that character is determined by its natural endowment,"<sup>40</sup> binds together the particularity of the individual and the universality of duty in such a way that certain institutions and practices which are necessary for the idea of freedom to have concrete existence (i.e., duties) simultaneously allow for the pursuit of happiness by the individual: "The right of individuals to their *particular* satisfaction is also contained in the ethical substantial order, since particularity is the outward appearance of the ethical order—a mode in which that order is existent."<sup>41</sup>

Thus by leading the 'universal life', the individual likewise secures satisfaction for his particular interests because their pursuit by and large serves the community as well and is in principle sanctioned by it as a necessary ingredient in the realization of its freedom.<sup>42</sup> Since virtues are a measure of the individual's excellence in discharging

objective duties, Hegel's ethics can likewise be called an institutionally based duty ethics.<sup>43</sup> It is likely, however, that Hegel underestimates the problem of conflicting duties. A conflict of duties would be an occasion for Hegel on which the individual can prove his particular virtuousness in overcoming such conflicts, but Hegel offers no decision procedure for such cases, nor does he explicitly thematize them. This, however, does not invalidate the position, it only shows that it needs to be developed further. The considerable virtue of the position consists in its attempt to reconcile Kantian heteronomy with the principle of autonomy.

But how does Hegel think that this reconciliation can be achieved? As we saw earlier, the element of particularity is necessary for action. Actions must have particular ends, and ends must be connected to particular motives for pursuing them. There must likewise be a universal end, which is nominally the same for both Kant and Hegel, the one calling it autonomy, the other freedom. However, for freedom to be actual, Hegel argues, there must be certain institutions and practices that give objective existence to freedom. It is these institutions and practices that specify duties in the form of obligations, responsibilities, and rules which must be observed if the institution or practice is to survive and to function well. The institutions and practices are, however, not imposed on the individuals. Rather, participation in them constitutes a rational goal for the individual's activities. In this sense, the individual is teleologically oriented toward participating in them, for instance as a family member, competitor in the market place, or professional of some kind or other.<sup>44</sup> One could say that according to Hegel these institutions or practices *select for* certain inclinations, desires, and interests which when employed in the service of the institutions more often than not develop into skills, expertise, and valuable character traits. That is to say, through being made subservient to those institutions and practices, the natural inclinations and endowments of human nature receive a *rational form*. While their use or expression outside, or prior to the establishment of, these institutions and practices would be arbitrary and heteronomous, their employment within them or on their behalf gives them meaning and substance and provides for a context within which

they become the means for self-determination.<sup>45</sup> For example, to earn a living by making money may involve love of material gain as a motive which *taken in isolation or out of context* would be an arbitrary desire but which within the system of needs of a society not only benefits both the society and the individual but also secures part of the material basis for the freedom of either. The argument is essentially an Aristotelian one: Anything serving as a means to an end loses its value and meaning once abstraction is made from the context within which it is supposed to function.<sup>46</sup> Consequently, Hegel can say:

The content which assumes the form of duties and then virtues is the same as that which also has the form of impulses . . . Impulses have the same basic content as duties and virtues, but in impulses this content still belongs to the immediate will and to instinctive feeling; it has not been developed to the point of becoming ethical.<sup>47</sup>

In this way, the earlier attempts at determining the good, either through a hedonistic calculus<sup>48</sup> or through the principle of universalizability or through conscience (or, we might add, through a utilitarian calculus), are stripped of their *ad hoc* character and provided with a set of normative guidelines (or objective goals) which in turn derive from the idea of freedom as a rationally ordered ensemble of institutions and practices which likewise honor the particular interests of the individual. Looked at from this point of view, morality signifies that stage of the dialectic of the good at which the rational will is antithetically opposed to the 'purely natural will'<sup>49</sup> such that the latter's naturalness cannot be transformed into a 'second nature'.<sup>50</sup> The subsumption of natural inclinations and desires and of the reflective personal interest under the rationally ordered system of institutions with its duties and norms is precisely what effects this transformation. In this context, it is interesting to note that Hegel allows for the reemergence of conscience at the level of the ethical life, albeit in an altered form, by distinguishing between "true" conscience and conscience as merely "the formal side of the activity of the will, which as this will has no special content of its own." True conscience, however, can exist only in an "objective system of *principles and duties*" which appears only with "the standpoint of ethical life."<sup>51</sup> As indi-



cated earlier, in the *Philosophy of Right* the standpoint of morality is by no means abandoned in the transition from conscience to the ethical life. The hallmark of the moral point of view, its distinction between the 'is' and the 'ought', although overcome at the institutional level, is still present in the relationship between the individual and the duties connected with institutions and practices. Hegel's duty and virtue ethics leaves ample room for judgments concerning the moral worth, or lack thereof, of an action or the excellence or shortcomings of the individual's performance as it also provides a measure for those judgments.

The eventual overcoming of the (Kantian) conflict between morality and nature<sup>52</sup> ushers in the ethical life of the modern world.<sup>53</sup> However, Hegel's argument for the 'sublation' of the moral point of view is not just an argument against what he perceived to be the abstractness of Kant's moral philosophy. Viewed against a contemporary background, Hegel's critique of morality can also be seen as an argument against normative ethics in general. According to Hegel, a deontological position à la Kant and the standpoint of conscience as discussed earlier must self-destruct because their idea of the good remains without determinate content. This is Hegel's notorious formalism critique in the *Phenomenology*, which runs through the earlier episodes of reason as lawgiver and reason as testing laws as well. The critique can be applied to all normative positions that assume that moral reflection is primarily an attempt to devise a universal decision procedure for whichever morally problematic case may arise. Such attempts founder on the fact that any moral decision procedure presupposes an idea of the good which is not reducible to the mere form of law (valid universally and categorically) or to the mere identity of word and deed. Hegel argues that genuine morality requires a paradigmatic idea of the good, which has a determinate content of its own. In the case of the *Philosophy of Right*, that paradigmatic idea is freedom. Nor can the content of the idea of the good consist in either a hedonistic notion of happiness or a more refined one as proposed by some utilitarian or consequentialist positions. The hedonistic calculus and its idea of a maximization of enjoyment misses the requirement of universality entirely, while the notion of the greatest good of

the greatest number, which as such was of course unknown to Hegel, says nothing about the question of the just distribution of goods in a society and remains restricted by an individualistic concept of happiness (as if the good of the society were synonymous with the sum of the good accruing to all its members). While this larger issue cannot be pursued here, it is perhaps worth pointing out that Hegel's idea of an institutionally based duty and virtue ethics may still be of interest even today, considering recent criticism of normative ethics and the changing landscape of ethical theorizing.<sup>54</sup>

There has of course been an extensive discussion of the *Phenomenology's* transition from conscience to religion although little has been done by way of a systematic comparison of it with the divergent transition in the *Philosophy of Right*.<sup>55</sup> My argument has been that Hegel bypasses forgiveness in the *Philosophy of Right* because he needs to retain the individual's particularity in order to mediate individual and social institutions which depend on this aspect of individuality. It is this particularity that is 'surrendered', so to speak, in the transition to religion. But one question in particular remains to be answered: Why is it that the *Phenomenology* itself does not progress from conscience to the ethical life of the modern state, only afterward to reach the life of the religious community? In other words, why does the *Phenomenology* pass directly from morality to religion? The reason, I suggest, derives from the systematic function of the *Phenomenology* as an introduction to the standpoint of the Hegelian system. And it is only from this standpoint that the modern state can be reconstructed as a manifestation of that concrete universal whose logical structure can be unfolded only in the logic of the notion. Inasmuch as the *Phenomenology* achieves the necessary logical 'plateau' of the notion only at its very end, the affirmative form of the ethical life in the modern state must await its reconstruction until we have reached the standpoint of the system.

## NOTES

1. Cf. G. W. F. Hegel, *The Phenomenology of Spirit* [= ET], trans. A. V. Miller (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977), p. 110. Ref-

erences to the *Philosophy of Right* are to Hegel's *Philosophy of Right* [= PR], trans. T. M. Knox (London, Oxford, and New York: Oxford University Press, 1952). Those to the *Encyclopedia Logic* are to G. W. F. Hegel, *The Encyclopedia Logic* [= Enc.], trans. T. F. Geraets, W. A. Suchting, and H. S. Harris (Indianapolis and Cambridge: Hackett, 1991). Those to the *Encyclopedia's* Philosophy of Objective Spirit are to Hegel's *Philosophy of Mind* [= PM], trans. A. V. Miller (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1971).

2. Cf. ET, p. 384. "This self of conscience . . . is the *third* self. We have reached it as the outcome of the third world of Spirit. . . ." Unlike the deontological consciousness, conscience is "*concrete* moral Spirit" (ET, p. 385).

3. Hegel calls it an "antinomy" (ET, p. 383).

4. ET, pp. 256–59.

5. ET, p. 365.

6. ET, p. 374.

7. Cf., ET, pp. 366–67.

8. Hegel puts it succinctly: "Because the universal best [i.e., the impossible] ought to be carried out, nothing good is done" (ET, p. 376). Note that the point here is not that as finite beings we can reasonably be expected only to do our best (that, I believe would be a commonsensical position), but that even our best effort can by definition never be good enough to merit the qualification of a morally, i.e., unconditionally, good action.

9. It remains to be seen why, in the *Philosophy of Right's* Ethical Life, personal interest and inclination are again compatible with duty without, however, leading to the deterioration, even perversion, of morality that evolves out of the morality of conscience.

10. ET, p. 387.

11. ET, p. 396.

12. Cf. ET, pp. 395–96.

13. ET, p. 397.

14. "The *existent reality* of conscience . . . is one which is a self, an existence which is conscious of itself, the spiritual element of being recognized and acknowledged" (ET, p. 388). Note that the emergence of spiritual community is closely linked for Hegel with the acquisition of a new content for language: "The language of the ethical Spirit [of ancient Greece] is law and simple command, and complaint, which is more a shedding of a tear about necessity [i.e., language here is little more than an expressivist medium]. [Kantian] moral consciousness, on the other hand, is still *dumb* [*stumm*, i.e.,

mute], shut up with itself within its inner life . . . The content of the language of conscience is the *self that knows itself as essential being*" and it functions as a "middle term, mediating between independent and acknowledged self-consciousnesses" (ET, p. 396).

15. ET, p. 397.

16. Cf. ET, pp. 400 ff.

17. In *Religion within the Limits of Reason Alone*, Kant speaks of an "ethical commonwealth" or a "kingdom of God on earth" (see Immanuel Kant, *Religion within the Limits of Reason Alone*, trans. T. M. Greene and H. H. Hudson, and "The Ethical Significance of Kant's Religion" by J. R. Silber [New York: Harper and Row, 1960], pp. 85 ff). I believe that this possible allusion to Kant's kingdom of ends is compatible with the fact that, as Gustav-H. H. Falke has shown, much of the detail of Hegel's discussion of conscience, including the episodes of the beautiful soul and the hard heart, reflects Jacobi's philosophy and in particular the content of his two novels *Allwill* and *Woldemar* (see Gustav-H. H. Falke, *Begriffene Geschichte: Das historische Substrat und die systematische Anordnung der Bewußtseinsgestalten in Hegels Phänomenologie des Geistes. Interpretation und Kommentar* (Berlin: Lukas Verlag, 1996), pp. 318–28).

18. For the members of the kingdom of ends, abstraction is made from "the personal differences of rational beings and also from all content of their private ends." See Immanuel Kant, *Grounding for the Metaphysics of Morals*, trans. J. W. Ellington (Indianapolis and Cambridge: Hackett, 1981), p. 39; and *Kants gesammelte Schriften*, vol. 4, ed. Königlich Preussischen Akademie der Wissenschaften (Berlin: Reimer, 1902), p. 433; hereafter cited as *Werke* 4.

19. ET, p. 398.

20. ET, p. 398.

21. ET, p. 398.

22. Immanuel Kant, *Werke* 4, pp. 433–34.

23. See note 8, above.

24. Acting necessarily collapses the distinction between motive and determining ground of the will because "duty for duty's sake, this pure purpose, is an unreality" (ET, p. 404).

25. ET, pp. 399–400.

26. ET, p. 400.

27. Cf. ET, p. 404.

28. It turns an illocutionary into a perlocutionary act, as we might say using contemporary terminology.

29. Cf. ET, pp. 405–408.

30. ET, p. 407.

31. ET, p. 411.

32. Cf. ET, pp. 410–11.

33. ET, p. 409.

34. See in particular ET, p. 475 (my emphasis): “The *death* of the divine Man, as death, is abstract negativity, the immediate result of the movement which ends only in *natural* universality. Death loses this natural meaning in spiritual self-consciousness . . . ; death becomes transfigured from its immediate meaning, viz., the non-being of this *particular* individual, into the *universality* of the Spirit who dwells in His community, dies in it every day, and is daily resurrected. Thus what belongs to the element of *picture-thinking*, viz. that absolute Spirit qua individual, or rather *qua* particular, Spirit, presents the nature of Spirit in its [natural] existence, is here shifted into self-consciousness itself. . . . This self-consciousness therefore does not actually *die*, as the particular self-consciousness is pictured as actually being dead, but *its particularity dies away in its universality*.”

35. Hegel comments on the difference between the two transitions in PR §140, p. 103: “What is said here [i.e., in the *Philosophy of Right*] may be compared with the entire section (C), ‘Conscience’, in the *Phenomenology*, especially the part dealing with the transition to a higher stage—a stage, however, there different in character.”

36. Enc. §514: “The consciously free substance, in which the absolute ‘ought’ is no less an ‘is’, has actuality as the spirit of a nation.”

37. Reminiscent in particular of Plato’s *Republic* and Aristotle’s view of the importance of good laws for the ethical life of a political community as expressed in *Nicomachean Ethics* X 9. See also Hegel’s reference to the Pythagorean Xenophilus, who when asked by a father “about the best method of educating his son in ethical conduct . . . replied: ‘Make him a citizen of a state with good laws’.” (PR §153, p. 109).

38. Allen Wood has called it a “self-actualization theory,” which he argues is distinct both from a deontological and from a teleological ethics (see Allen W. Wood, *Hegel’s Ethical Thought* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), pp. 30–32). I am not so sure, however, that this is a good characterization, for although it is correct to say, as Wood does, that such a theory does not begin “with an end with a specifiable content to which such self directs its efforts” (31), this is true only from the point of view of that individual who neglects to assume the objective point of view. The individual participating consciously and conscientiously in the ethical life does identify with its institutions and practices and makes the duties,

responsibilities, and obligations they enjoin part of his or her own ethical self-understanding and conviction.

39. PR §148, p. 106.

40. PR §150, p. 107.

41. PR §154, p. 109.

42. As Hegel puts it in the *Encyclopedia Logic*, the individual's particularity is the mediating factor between itself as a singular being and the needs of the community: "In the practical sphere, for instance, the State is a system of three syllogisms . . . (1) The *singular* (the person) concludes himself through his *particularity* (the physical and spiritual needs, which when further developed on their own account give rise to civil society) with the *universal* (society, right, law, government)" (Enc. §198, p. 276).

43. Indeed, the latter characterization would seem to come closest to Hegel's intentions inasmuch as he believes that virtues are more an expression of individual valence and courage in uncertain or corrupt times: "In an existing ethical order in which a complete system of ethical relations has been developed and actualized, virtue in the strict sense of the word is in place and actually appears only in exceptional circumstances or when one obligation clashes with another. . . . It is for this reason that the phenomenon of virtue proper is commoner when societies and communities are uncivilized, since in those circumstances ethical conditions . . . are more a matter of private choice or the natural genius of an exceptional individual" (PR §150, p. 108). Hegel here seems to embrace a "heroic" notion of virtue that according to him would be largely out of place or obsolete in a civilized modern society.

44. Hegel develops this argument, viz., that the individual qua rational wills the universal, in the introduction to the *Philosophy of Right*: "Only in freedom of this kind [i.e., objective freedom of the ethical life] is the will by itself without qualification, because then it is related to nothing except itself and so is released from every tie of dependence on anything else. The will is then true, or rather truth itself, because its self-determination consists in a correspondence between what it is in its existence (i.e., what it is as objective to itself) and its concept; in other words, the pure concept of the will has the intuition of itself for its goal and its reality" (PR §23, pp. 30–31; see also §§19–22 and 24).

45. If one were to abstract from the requirement that institutions and practices serve the realization of the idea of freedom and can be justified in their validity only through having recourse to the idea of freedom, one retains MacIntyre's conception of virtue ethics in *After Virtue*.

46. See Aristotle, *Politics* I 9, on the purpose of wealth and the two "arts of wealth getting."

47. PR §150, p. 108.

48. Cf. ET, pp. 217–19, "Pleasure and Necessity."

49. PR§ 151, p. 108.

50. PR§ 151, p. 108.

51. PR§ 137, p. 91. For a discussion of the two forms of conscience and the role of true conscience in the ethical life, see most recently Robert R. Williams's superb study, *Hegel's Ethics of Recognition* (Berkeley, Los Angeles, and London: University of California Press, 1997), pp. 192–205. With Williams, I believe that Hegel's ethics can best be described as a theory of "immanent social duties . . . [which are] nothing more than the development of those intersubjective relations and institutions that are necessary for freedom" (p. 206).

52. Cf. ET, p. 365.

53. I am aware of the criticism that this 'subsumption' of the individual under the communal ethos leaves Hegel open to the charge that the individual might have no recourse against a morally corrupt political community or government, and that therefore an ethical position independent of the ethos of the social and political community (such as a Kantian position which abstracts from the communal ethos) must be reintroduced (see, for instance, Alan Donagan, *The Theory of Morality* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1977), pp. 11–14). Hegel's subsumption of the individual under the concrete universal does indeed leave many questions open, but he is not for that reason vulnerable to the criticism that he makes the individual morally defenseless against totalitarianism or other perversions of the idea of the political. The reason is that for him this subsumption is itself legitimate only if the political and social orders are themselves manifestations of the idea of freedom. In a bad state, the subsumption would be nullified, a scenario that Hegel does not discuss. For a judicious discussion of Hegel's 'conservatism' and the alleged suppression of the individual, see Michael O. Hardimon, *Hegel's Social Philosophy: The Project of Reconciliation* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), pp. 24–37.

54. For a glimpse of a situation very much in flux, see volume I of the *Proceedings of the Twentieth World Congress of Philosophy* (Bowling Green: Philosophy Documentation Center, 1999) and my introduction to the volume, pp. xi–xx.

55. For an excellent overview of this discussion, see Joseph C. Flay, *Hegel's Quest for Certainty* (Albany: State University of New York Press,

1984), pp. 382–88. For the claim that the transition in the *Philosophy of Right* reverts to the original plan of the *Phenomenology*, see Falke, *Begriffene Geschichte*, p. 271.



# THE TRUTH OF ABSOLUTES WISSEN

in Hegel's *Phenomenology  
of Spirit*

ANGELICA NUZZO

With the chapter on *absolutes Wissen*<sup>1</sup> that concludes the *Phenomenology of Spirit*, Hegel opens up a series of fundamental questions concerning the relation between the *Phenomenology* as a whole and the ‘system of science’ which receives its foundation precisely in that conclusion. Moreover, the end provided by *absolutes Wissen* brings us directly back to the very beginning of the work—to the famous programmatic statements of the preface whose composition is (not only chronologically) very close to that of the last chapter of the work. The title *absolutes Wissen* parallels in important ways two other crucial passages of Hegel’s mature system of philosophy. On the one hand, *absolutes Wissen* suggests a relation to the *absolute Idee* in which the *Science of Logic* reaches its culmination; on the other hand, the conclusion of the “first part” of the “system of science” lends itself to a confrontation with the general conclusion of the whole system of philosophy presented in the *Encyclopedia* as the sphere of *absoluter Geist*. The most apparent feature common to all these struc-

tures is the *absolute* character predicated respectively of *Wissen*, *Idee*, and *Geist*. And yet the precise meaning of that 'absoluteness'—its ontological as well as epistemological significance in Hegel's philosophy—seems to have remained obscure to most interpreters.<sup>2</sup>

The aim of this chapter is to shed light on the meaning of Hegel's *absolute* in relation to the last chapter of the *Phenomenology of Spirit*. In what follows, the important interpretative question, what is the nature of the figure that Hegel calls *absolutes Wissen* at the end of the *Phenomenology*, will be addressed as a particular instance of the following two more general problems: (1) what are the structures that for Hegel can adequately be called 'absolute', and (2) what does it imply for a structure to be defined as 'absolute'? In answering the first question, Hegel confronts both the contemporary attempts to establish a philosophy of the Absolute and Kant's criticism of metaphysics, while in articulating the second problem, Hegel is already working on the logic that underlies the general systematic project of his later philosophy. This chapter is indeed more concerned with the relation between *absolutes Wissen* and the successive construction of Hegel's system than with its origins in Hegel's earlier philosophical endeavors. The way that the specific phenomenological context will determine my analysis of *absolutes Wissen* is influenced by Hegel's treatment of two different issues, each found in the preface to the *Phenomenology* and mirrored in the conceptual development of its final chapter.

On the one hand, in the figure of consciousness attained in *absolutes Wissen*, Hegel provides his programmatic response to the contemporary controversy about the possibility and the modalities of a "knowledge of the Absolute"; in that same chapter, he also offers a revision of his earlier project of a "construction of the Absolute for consciousness," already formulated in the *Difference Essay* as the specific task of philosophy.<sup>3</sup> On the other hand, it is only in the structures of a *Wissen* that can eventually be called 'absolute' that the famous programmatic statement regarding the relation between 'substance' and 'subject' in the dimension of truth is ultimately and completely fulfilled. *Absolutes Wissen* establishes philosophy as science in the 'element' of truth. Truth, however, is not grounded in a transcendent *ens* or an 'absolute' divine substance. Truth is nothing else but the process

through which substance becomes subject—truth expresses the nature and activity of *spirit* (*Geist*). Spirit that knows itself as what it has become is ‘absolute knowing’.

In what follows I would like to make the claim, first, that Hegel’s *absolutes Wissen*, representing Hegel’s critical answer to the problem of the “knowledge of the Absolute,” amounts to the destruction—or *Aufhebung*—of the ontological-metaphysical notion of ‘the Absolute’. This is a move that will remain crucial for Hegel’s mature construction of the system of philosophy and for his idea of dialectical method. This leads to the discussion of what constitutes the ‘absolute’ character of Hegel’s *absolutes Wissen*—i.e., to the *methodological* problem of the adequate presentation or exposition (*Darstellung*) of a knowledge that has been completed in the form of its absoluteness. Hegel claims that what is ‘absolute’ in the last of all the successive figures that the structure of *Wissen* has gone through in the *Phenomenology* is nothing but the form of its conclusive presentation; i.e., ‘absolute’ is not a particular content of knowing, but its very modality or form.

It is precisely this statement that allows the transition to the *Logic*. *Wissen* is now established as the activity of a pure *Begreifen*, as the pure conceptual comprehension in which the *Logic* can begin a new development. And yet absolute knowing is still a figure of phenomenological *Wissen*, even if it is proper to the power of the pure concept. Moreover, I would like to suggest that the last chapter of the *Phenomenology* provides an essential relation not only to the *beginning* of the *Logic* but also to its very *end*—to the idea of “absolute method” as the necessary form of philosophical knowledge. Once the two previous points have been established, a closer analysis of the movement of *absolutes Wissen* will clarify in what sense its structures are both ‘absolute’ and the culmination of the whole phenomenological process.

# I. KNOWLEDGE OF THE ABSOLUTE, ABSOLUTES WISSEN, AND FINITE CONSCIOUSNESS

## Being and Knowing of the Absolute

The history of philosophy testifies to how 'the Absolute' has presented philosophical thinking with a twofold, fundamental problem. On the one hand, there is the crucial question of the *ontological determination* of the Absolute as *ens* (*sumмум ens*) or the question of the *metaphysical description* of the *absolutum ens*: the determination of *what* the Absolute is in its absolute Being. On the other hand, philosophy has to face the corresponding *epistemological problem* of the possibility of a specific form of 'knowledge': 'cognition' or simply 'thought' of the Absolute as such.<sup>4</sup> Reflection on this twofold problem occupies Hegel intensely during the whole Jena period, and culminates in the preface to the *Phenomenology of Spirit* (written after the composition of the *absolutes Wissen* chapter). Hegel is led here to the conclusion that if the Absolute is maintained as a metaphysical reality that simply is 'what it is' and 'because it is', then, since nothing more can be predicated of it than this empty tautology, no discursive knowledge of the Absolute would ever be possible. What is left is only, at the most, an intuition or an immediate knowledge of it—a bare and faint *unmittelbares Wissen*.<sup>5</sup> Such a figure of *Wissen*, however, cannot ground philosophy as science, since science as *wirkliches Wissen* must establish itself in the 'element' of the 'concept', namely in the discursive—mediated and mediating—dimension of *reason*.<sup>6</sup>

Since the *Differenzschrift*, Hegel had argued that reason is bound to the Absolute by a particular relation, since it represents the expression or 'manifestation' (*Erscheinung*) of the Absolute, the means whereby the Absolute knows itself.<sup>7</sup> If philosophy is to be grounded as science, then Hegel's chief concern is to show what the only possible form of philosophical knowledge should be. According to Hegel, philosophy as science is discursive knowledge *par excellence*. Moreover, it is in the dimension of reason that science has to prove both the power of its actuality and the concrete meaning of its medi-

ations. "The power of spirit is only as great as its expression and exteriorization (*Äußerung*), its depth only as deep as it dares to spread out and lose itself in its exposition."<sup>8</sup> This expression and exteriorization is the starting point for the 'recollection' (*Er-Innerung*) that is attempted by absolute knowing in the *Phenomenology's* conclusion. It is important to stress the significance of Hegel's careful remark—repeated both in the preface and in the *absolutes Wissen* chapter—that the 'concept' constitutes the form or the *medium* of the 'existence' (*Existenz/Dasein*) of science.<sup>9</sup> It is not enough for Hegel to show how science is possible; it is also necessary to display its full actuality.<sup>10</sup> Hegel addresses this need at the very end of the *Phenomenology* by showing the necessary relation between the concept (of science), on the one hand, and time and history on the other. Science and its 'absolute' modality of knowing are intrinsically and necessarily historical. History then is the actuality of reason.<sup>11</sup> This claim constitutes the specific phenomenological component of Hegel's project in 1807. Reason is not the re-naming of an esoteric Absolute but the standpoint of *absolutes Wissen* reached by finite consciousness as the conclusion of the whole process of experience; absolute knowing, for Hegel, not only belongs to experience, but constitutes its immanent structure as well as the condition of its 'truth'.<sup>12</sup>

Moreover, Hegel's argument against the traditional theories of the Absolute aims at showing that if the Absolute retains a being that is independent of all knowledge, only a finite or conditioned knowledge of the Absolute is possible. This amounts to an 'external reflection' on the Absolute that is in principle unable to penetrate the secrets of its object. But to commit philosophy to this kind of knowledge means to set up a contradiction in the very notion of the Absolute. Finite knowledge of the Absolute reveals itself as the knowledge of a finite Absolute or of a non-absolute Absolute. Therefore the contemporary alternative to 'immediate knowing', the philosophy of finite 'reflection', is also ruled out by Hegel's project. Furthermore, if discursive thinking cannot introduce in the Absolute any determination through which it can be led to a *wirkliches Erkennen*<sup>13</sup>—to an effectual and actual cognition—then the only possibility is to declare that in the Absolute "all is one" or "everything is

the same"—the tautological  $A = A$ .<sup>14</sup> But a *Wissen* that can only go as far as portraying the Absolute as the famous "night in which . . . all cows are black" reveals itself as the "naïveté of a vacuum of any cognition."<sup>15</sup> In his harsh criticism, Hegel points here to the fundamental claim that the whole phenomenological process sets out to establish: *there is no knowing of the Absolute (Wissen) without the mediation of a process of cognition (Erkennen)*.

But even those theories that describe the Absolute as the 'Ur-' that precedes and conditions all that belongs to the realm of discursive thinking—as the 'origin' or 'ground', the *primum* or *fundamentum* of every content and form—necessarily end up by proclaiming the sheer impossibility of a *cognitive* access to the Absolute. In order to be the real source of all possible knowledge, the Absolute should remain un-thinkable, un-knowable, even un-pronounceable; it should be assumed to be an un-explorable 'beyond' that is—and should be—maintained as untouched by all cognition and knowledge. Since every 'Ur-' reveals itself as an 'Un-'—as a limit and impossibility for reason—knowledge remains, in all those theories, only *finite* and *conditioned* knowledge, and never rises to *absolute* knowing.<sup>16</sup> This conclusion eventually coincides with Kant's criticism of metaphysics.

Presenting his notion of the 'transcendental idea', Kant draws a fundamental distinction in the use of the term 'absolute' as an adjective.<sup>17</sup> "The word *absolute* is now often used merely to indicate that something is the case for a thing considered in itself (*an sich selbst*) and therefore to indicate that it is *inwardly* (*innerlich*) valid. In this sense the absolutely possible would mean that which is in itself possible—which is, in fact, the least that can be said of an object." Accordingly, to view things in the etymological perspective of the *absolutus*—i.e., placing them beyond all relations—amounts to the claim of discovering their internal truth. However, due to its abstractness, this truth is indeed a very poor result.<sup>18</sup> A second use of the term is different: "The word [absolute] is sometimes used to indicate that something is valid in all respects (relations—*Beziehungen*) . . . . In this sense the absolutely possible would mean what is possible in every relation—which is the most that can be said of an object."<sup>19</sup>

'Absolute' in this sense is opposed to what is valid only comparatively, i.e., is the opposite of 'relative'. Kant insists on the need to exhibit a *totality of relations* in order to declare something 'absolute' in this second meaning. This use leads to the further question of the *subject* of which the term 'absolute' can be predicated. Kant investigates the possibility of predicating the 'absolute' of the ideas of reason—a possibility that he has to exclude, since no constitutive use of ideas can be made in the speculative knowledge of reason. The logic of the judgment that has the 'absolute' as predicate does not belong, for Kant, to the realm of possible knowledge—neither to empirical nor to speculative knowledge. Against the position of the first *Critique*, Hegel sets out in the *Phenomenology* to demonstrate not only that the "speculative idea" that constitutes the one and only content of philosophy is 'absolute',<sup>20</sup> but also that the 'absolute idea', as philosophical knowledge, is the highest form of knowledge, namely 'absolute' knowledge. The claim that "the idea of the absolute essence,"<sup>21</sup> or the "speculative idea" that Kant had banned from the realm of all possible knowledge of reason, is the very content of philosophy had already been established by Hegel before he wrote the *Phenomenology*. Yet the problem of the mode of its philosophical cognition and appropriation still remained, in an important sense, open.

### The Absolute as *absolutes Wissen*

The alternative to the *impasse* that all the aforementioned positions present—to 'immediate knowing' as well as to 'external reflection', to Schelling as well as to Kant—was already clear to Hegel in the early Jena period. In order for absolute knowledge, and consequently for philosophy, to be possible at all, it is necessary to provide a radically new conception of the Absolute itself. The Absolute cannot be ontologically separate from and epistemologically independent of knowledge. The being of the Absolute should rather be thought as the being of 'absolute knowledge' itself—*Sein* as *Wissen/Erkennen* and vice versa. Hegel, however, encounters a twofold (and crucial) problem: on the one hand, the *systematic* question of the position that the 'absolute' must necessarily now occupy in philosophical

thinking, and on the other, the question of the *content* and *form* that are to determine the 'absolute' character of knowing.

The idea that *absolutes Wissen* as *Wissen* of an indeterminate and indeterminable Absolute is possible only through intuition, feeling, faith, or immediate knowing leads, according to Hegel, to the unacceptable point that the Absolute must be assumed as the *starting point* of philosophy. Yet, according to this model, since all discursive knowledge is banned from the apprehension of the Absolute—an apprehension that can only be immediate (i.e., really be apprehension of the Absolute) if it is kept 'pure' of any contact with the finite—philosophy begins with the Absolute, and must then stop short at this very beginning. Under these conditions, philosophy as science is utterly impossible; not only because reason and the concept do not find any place in it, but also because the *form* of philosophy—the form of the developed totality of the *system*—becomes impossible.

In the *Phenomenology*, Hegel's philosophical program develops in radical opposition to this model of immediate knowing. The Absolute does not constitute the beginning but rather the *end* of science. With the famous claim, "The true is the whole (*das Wahre ist das Ganze*),"<sup>22</sup> Hegel already frames the problem of the Absolute in terms of the constructive needs of a form of cognition that constitutes itself as the *system* of science: "The true is actual only as system."<sup>23</sup> The being of the Absolute is now its own *actuality*; this actuality, however, is nothing but *true cognition*, or the act of *self-cognition* (*Selbsterkenntnis*) through which the Absolute becomes what it is and knows itself as what it has become, as Hegel suggested early in the Jena period. True cognition, in turn, is possible only as the whole development that first establishes what truth is:

The whole is nothing other than the essence consummating itself through its development (*das durch seine Entwicklung sich vollendende Wesen*). Of the Absolute it must be said that it is essentially a *result*, that only at the *end* is it what it truly is; and precisely in this consists its nature, i.e., to be actual (*Wirkliches*), subject, the becoming of itself (*sich selbst Werden*).<sup>24</sup>



Hegel's suggestion, however, that the Absolute as *truth*, and consequently as *system*, should not be simply the end of philosophy, but rather its final *result* represents only the beginning of a solution to the problem. What remains is, above all, the question, What does it mean to be the 'result' of a process of self-development?<sup>25</sup> It means neither to be its hidden *telos* nor to be the final position of a 'presupposition' secretly guiding the unfolding of the process. Hegel's dialectic, in its phenomenological as well as its logical and *realphilosophische* forms, is not conceived as a teleological process.<sup>26</sup> This implies that Hegel's claim that the Absolute is a 'result', i.e., that we will be able to find the Absolute only in the chapter on *absolutes Wissen*, and only under the condition of having previously gone through the whole phenomenological movement, does not provide any further indication as to *what* this Absolute will be like.<sup>27</sup> Hegel's argument can be summarized in the following way: In order for philosophy as science to be possible, it should be established as the total system of true knowledge. The Absolute cannot be assumed as a starting point. Only at the end of the constructive process that constitutes the system, and as its final result, will the Absolute present itself as the *truth* of all previously examined modalities of knowledge. At the beginning of the process, however, it is by no means possible to say *what* the result will be like. For Hegel to abandon beginning with the Absolute means to radically question the very significance of a *metaphysical* Absolute for philosophical knowledge. Moreover, the critical and skeptical force of this argument can be measured by the fact that putting the Absolute at the end of the process does not mean, for Hegel, simply to reposition an already given structure that still maintains all its previously assumed characters. Since the claim that the Absolute is a result can be made only if we begin with rational and discursive knowledge (and not with intellectual intuition, faith, or immediate knowing), all positions of finite knowing must be taken into account in order to reach that final result. It is precisely this inclusion of finite consciousness in the construction of the Absolute that produces the skeptical disruption of the traditional concept of the Absolute. '*Absolutes Wissen*' is the conclusion eventually reached and produced by a *finite* consciousness that in it demonstrates what truth really is. A form of

knowing that was initially limited to conditions that made it mere '*erscheinendes Wissen*'—appearing knowing and appearance of knowing—is now established as '*wirkliches Wissen*' or science. At this point, '*absolutes Wissen*' has taken the place of the Absolute, and in so doing, has essentially transformed the nature of the Absolute itself. '*Absolutes Wissen*' is now nothing else but the form of science as the *method of philosophical knowledge* or as the method of knowing things in the dimension of truth.

Since for Hegel the method is both the way in which consciousness should proceed in knowing the truth and the *Darstellung* or exposition of this knowing-process as a whole, we can expect one of the functions of dialectic to be the *pedagogical* task of leading consciousness to the path of science.<sup>28</sup> The relation between consciousness and science shows two interwoven sides:

Science on its part requires that self-consciousness should have raised itself into the Aether [of pure self-recognition in absolute otherness] in order to be able to live—and actually to live—with science and in science. Conversely, the individual *has the right* to demand that science should at least provide him with the ladder to this standpoint . . . This *right* is based on the absolute independence, which the individual is conscious of possessing in every phase of his knowledge.<sup>29</sup>

What at the beginning of science appears as a 'right' of the individual, with regard to science, at its very end becomes the 'duty' of the subject: to follow the method in order to be able to live in the dimension of truth and freedom ("self-recognition in absolute otherness"). This transformation is what Hegel calls the "coming-to-be of science."<sup>30</sup> It should be stressed that this *Werden der Wissenschaft* is parallel to, and eventually identical with, both the *sich selbst Werden* of the Absolute in the structures of *absolutes Wissen*<sup>31</sup> and the *Werden seiner zu dem, was [der Geist] an sich ist* proper to all individual consciousness that has gone through the whole phenomenological process.<sup>32</sup> This coming-to-onself is the final conciliation of the objective side of knowledge with its subjective side—*absolutes Wissen*. The relation of science to the finite thinking subject has to accom-

pany the dialectical self-development of reason over its whole course.<sup>33</sup> The relationship between consciousness and science—or, to put it in another way, the relationship between *erscheinendes Wissen* and *wirkliches Wissen*—both plays an introductory role and is also constitutive of the philosophical method, an essential part or moment of it. Its *Darstellung* or exposition must include an account of what the behavior of finite consciousness is, once it agrees on following this method through or commits itself to it. What interests me here about the relation between finite consciousness and philosophy's absolute knowledge is the representation that consciousness has of that 'road' or 'ladder' to science and of that science's method. To ask *what* is the *representation* that consciousness has of science in its 'coming-to-be' is to ask *how* science *appears* to consciousness, or *what experience* the finite subject has of philosophical method while practicing it. Hegel's direct answer to this question stresses the negative character of consciousness's experience:

Natural consciousness will show itself to be only the concept of knowledge (*nur Begriff des Wissens*), or in other words, not to be *real knowledge* (*reales Wissen*). But since it directly takes itself to be real knowledge, *this path has the negative significance for it*, and *what is in fact the realization of the concept, counts for it rather as the loss of its own self*. . . . The road can therefore be regarded as the *pathway of doubt, or more precisely as the way of despair*.<sup>34</sup>

Hegel generally described the process that science undergoes as the "realization of the concept." What at the beginning and during the process is *only* the concept must become *real* or *actual* concept, and *real* or *actual* knowledge. The goal is the accomplished truth of the whole system.<sup>35</sup> But this means that the accomplished reality of knowledge or its 'absolute' standpoint can be attained only through the full development of all its appearing figures. At each step of this process, only a 'partial' truth can be reached, a limited assertion that is not yet real knowledge; this partial truth is the position that science occupies. But the finite subject who follows this process and lives in it has a very different experience of the whole: consciousness always claims to be already at the position of *real* knowledge; consequently

it does not want to recognize the necessity of the process itself. And when it must admit that something like a transformation of both its knowledge and the object of this knowledge has taken place, as it were, behind its back, then this movement has for it the meaning of a "loss of its own self." For finite thinking the method is, therefore, as Hegel expresses it, "the pathway of doubt" or "the way of despair." In the apparently assured development of the concept, natural consciousness is forced to doubt itself, its truth as well as the object that it claims to know as true. The doubt rises to despair when the subject acknowledges that in this path it loses *its* truth and, with it, its own *self*. Furthermore, Hegel stresses here how the *despair* in which consciousness is entangled must also be related to a "feeling of *violence*" that consciousness suffers "at the hands of reason."<sup>36</sup> Reason prevents consciousness from reaching its satisfaction, compelling it to always go beyond itself and, in so doing, to lose itself in its other.

What initially seemed to be two radically opposed standpoints—science's absolute knowledge and the unreal knowledge of finite thinking—turned out to be two positions ultimately identical with each other. The point of Hegel's argument is to show that eventually the one merges into the other. Natural consciousness, being "explicitly the *concept* of itself,"<sup>37</sup> becomes absolute knowledge eliminating all "opposition" to science,<sup>38</sup> whereas the path of science transforms that doubting and despairing of consciousness into the methodological doubt of skepticism, thus becoming "thoroughgoing skepticism" (*sich vollbringenden Skeptizismus*).<sup>39</sup> With this last point, we have reached what interests me most in this whole argument, namely, the transformation of the mere extrinsic relation of the subject to science into a constitutive position of scientific method itself. Heidegger's comment on the quoted passage from Hegel's *Phenomenology* will help us to understand this issue more clearly.

The phenomenological exposition is the way of consciousness's doubt. Heidegger, however, observes that this way is the pathway of consciousness's despair only for science, which watches the whole process. Consciousness never despairs; its doubt is certainly also despair, but consciousness never really acknowledges it. It is science

instead that takes consciousness's doubt upon itself and ends up despairing. "Doubting in the sense of despairing is what science, namely absolute knowledge, does."<sup>40</sup> Hegel needs, in some ways, to incorporate the tragic side of consciousness's own experience into the way in which absolute knowledge develops. This means that the doubting/despairing is not merely a subjective and provisional feature of phenomenological exposition but is rather a constitutive character of scientific method. If this is the case, then the 'way of despair' shows a necessarily twofold dimension: it is one and the same path that underlies both the experience of an individual finite subject and the process of reason's absolute knowledge. A strictly hierarchical order between finite and absolute knowledge is therefore eliminated. What is suggested instead is a common and unifying, more complex conception of method, one that would be valid for two different but correlated subjects or standpoints. This is the structure of *absolutes Wissen* reached at the end of the *Phenomenology*.

## 2. 'ABSOLUTES WISSEN' AS CONCLUSION OF THE PHENOMENOLOGY

The investigation of Hegel's criticism of contemporary theories of the Absolute, and the evidence of the new metaphysical and epistemological meaning reached at the end of the *Phenomenology* by means of the dialectical 'transformation' of the Absolute into *absolutes Wissen*, allow for the following conclusion. Hegel's *speculative* use of the term 'absolute' is limited to its predicative use as an adjective and explicitly excludes its validity as a noun. Hegel speaks of 'absolute' knowing, idea, method, cognition, freedom, and spirit, while he criticizes the hypostatization of the adjective in the substantive form: 'the Absolute'. On the basis of the conclusion of the *Phenomenology*, in Hegel's philosophy what is 'absolute' can no longer be the highest *ens* of an ontology; it is rather the term that designates the way in which the structures of thinking, cognition, and knowing function once they are grounded in the complete 'system' of reason. Only *absolutes Wissen* can be said to be 'absolute'—or, to put it in

another way, 'absolute' is only the way in which our finite subjective thinking ultimately thinks when it thinks in the forms of science. In other words, *we* think and know *absolutely* if and only if we think in the way *prescribed* by the absolute knowing of science, i.e., if we are eventually able to identify *our* thinking procedure with the form of the *absolutes Wissen*. Absolute knowing is the point in which consciousness's *erscheinendes Wissen* has transformed itself into *wirkliches Wissen*, into the reality of science. What makes the 'absolute' character of knowing is not the nature of the substance or subject that thinks, but rather the method according to which the thinking activity actually thinks. Hegel's fundamental transformation of Kant's philosophy does not consist in a shift from the finite subject of thinking to a new theory of the Absolute, as has often been repeated. Instead, Hegel shows that the logic of the 'absolute' is nothing but the logic of our subjective finite consciousness once it recognizes the 'concept' as its constitutive (and not merely regulative) method. This is the doctrine of the *Phenomenology* in its final 'result'. Moreover, it is precisely *this* result that allows the Logic to begin.

### What Is It That Can Be Called 'Absolute'?

I want to suggest that the procedure inaugurated by Hegel in the *Phenomenology* with the structures of *absolutes Wissen* gains a more general significance in the later construction of the system of philosophy. In order to provide indirect evidence for this point, I will discuss the formal characters that Hegel associates with the 'absolute' position proper to the last figure of the *Phenomenology*.<sup>41</sup> In what follows, I will proceed by repeating the main claims Hegel makes in the preface concerning the characteristics of 'absolute knowing' as a substitute for 'the Absolute', drawing new implications from them with each repetition in order to shed light on the complex construction of the *Phenomenology*'s last chapter.<sup>42</sup>

- (A) In all of Hegel's concluding systematic passages where different 'absolute' forms occur—in the *absolutes Wissen* of the *Phenomenology*, in the *absolute Idee* of the *Science of Logic*, and finally in

the *absoluter Geist* of the *Encyclopedia*—‘*absolute*’ appears as the predicate that a particular structure can gain only as it presents itself as the necessary *conclusion* of the development of a *whole* process, and never before: respectively, in the movement of consciousness’s own experience, in the immanent constructive dialectic of pure logical thinking, and in the complex systematic articulation of the idea of philosophy. In this usage, the predicate *absolute* essentially specifies that particular structure in relation to the whole *spectrum* of figures which carry the same designation. Yet, *absolutes Wissen* is not simply one, even if the *last* one, among all possible forms or figures that the general structure of *Wissen* can assume in the process of its internal dialectical exposition (as *Erscheinung des Bewußtseins*). To be *ab-solutus* etymologically means to be placed beyond all relations, to be in relation only to oneself, and therefore to occupy a (methodologically) privileged position in the process. At the same time, however, according to the twofold significance of the term already noticed by Kant, to be ‘absolute’ means to represent, as it were, the *Inbegriff* (*complexus*) or the sum total of all those possible figures and forms, of all those necessary variations on the same structure whose *ratio essendi* and *ratio cognoscendi* is now represented by their ‘absolute’ conclusive form.

As clearly stated by the preface, to be ‘absolute’ means to be the conclusion of a movement as its own *necessary result*: the ‘absolute’ structure is the whole that first arises out of that process as its final and definitive recapitulation. This is the reason why the last chapter of the *Phenomenology* begins with the recapitulation of the “totality” of the “moments” and “determinations” of consciousness,<sup>43</sup> and ends with the recollection proper of a final act of *Er-Innerung*.<sup>44</sup> Consequently, in the immanent development of the process, only a unique, single structure will be able to exhibit an ‘absolute’ character. This will be precisely the structure that possesses *all* the determinations proper to the sphere in question (the development of *Wissen* as becoming subject of the substance or as immanent ‘deduction’ of the pure ‘concept’, the self-construction of the logical ‘idea’, as the

process of pure thinking through all its determinations, the realization of the concept of *Geist* to its idea). Furthermore, in relation to its *content*, only what constitutes a *complete* whole (*Ganzes*) of determinations can appropriately be called 'absolute'. In this way, *absolutes Wissen* is the demonstrated truth of the programmatic statement of the preface: "The true is the whole." *Completeness* and *comprehensiveness* are therefore the essential connotations of knowing's absoluteness: they refer both to the content and to the form of *absolutes Wissen*. The *content* of absolute knowing is the recognition that *all* consciousness's and spirit's figures are products of the activity of the self.<sup>45</sup> Its *form* is the *comprehension* that belongs to the act of *Be-greifen*, of conceptual appropriation. Moreover, the stage of *absolutes Wissen* discloses, for the first time, a double relation to the 'whole', according to whether it is displayed "in the concept" itself or "in consciousness."

*In the concept that knows itself as concept (in dem Begriffe, der sich als Begriff weiß), the moments thus appear earlier than the fulfilled whole (das erfüllte Ganze) whose coming-to-be (Werden) is the movement of those moments. In consciousness, on the other hand, the whole, though uncomprehended (unbegriffne), is prior to the moments.*<sup>46</sup>

Absolute knowing reveals that 'truth' as *Ganzes* appears twice, or in twofold form, in the last step of the phenomenological process: (a) it appears, first, in consciousness and for consciousness as not yet fulfilled or realized totality, as a truth of which there is neither 'comprehension' nor real knowledge yet; but (b) the whole presents itself again "in the concept," as the knowledge that the concept has of itself as a totality eventually realized and full of content. *Absolutes Wissen*—the 'truth' that is the 'whole'—is the whole *in this twofold form* at the same time: it is the fulfilled whole *because it has been* the empty beginning of consciousness's own experience; and it is the nonconceptual totality that needs to be *re-called* because the complete whole is result.



- (B) In addition, to be ‘absolute’ as the *end* of the process considered *as a whole* has, for Hegel, a further systematic significance. The *absoluteness* of a structure is the *topological description* of its necessary placing in the dialectical process. The ‘absolute’ character that thinking attains at the end of its development (in the *Phenomenology*, in the *Logic*, and in the later *Philosophy of Spirit*) is not the result of an abstraction from all relations. In this perspective, indeed, thinking is neither absolute nor capable of any conclusive truth or knowledge. It is rather still engaged in the “path of doubt” that characterizes all partial positions and figures of consciousness along the development of the *Phenomenology*. Precisely in this sense, Hegel can maintain, in the section of the later *Encyclopedia* entitled Phenomenology, that Kant’s philosophy had not advanced beyond the consideration of spirit as mere consciousness, and consequently provided only a ‘phenomenology’ and not a proper ‘philosophy’ of spirit.<sup>47</sup> According to Hegel, since Kant made *absolutes Wissen* in principle impossible as a philosophic position, he was unable to actually conclude the phenomenology and move on to the level of science. Contrary to this line of reasoning, Hegel’s point in the last chapter of the *Phenomenology* is to show that thinking and knowing become absolute when they show the total relational form of the *system*, namely, when they can claim a position in which every possible relation has been thematically explored and examined. In this way, Hegel presents his idea of dialectic as the method of skeptical refutation that has finally consumed itself (*sich vollbringender Skeptizismus*). An ‘absolute’ standpoint can be reached only at the end of the dialectical development. This ‘end’ is a final argument that contains in itself all possible counter-arguments together with their refutation. ‘Absolute’, therefore, signifies the total system of relations and determinations that Hegel designates as *absolutes Wissen*.<sup>48</sup> All other speculative figures of which an ‘absolute’ character can be predicated can be said to be ‘absolute’ if and only if they can achieve the same final identification with the form of ‘absolute knowing’ that we do achieve at the end of the *Phenomenology*.

- (C) Hegel's procedure of singling out a structure by means of its 'absolute' nature introduces both a *difference of content* and a *difference of form* in its intentional description that essentially distinguishes it from all the forms that carry the same designation. This procedure thereby generates a sort of homonymy in Hegel's philosophical terminology. In an important sense, *absolutes Wissen* is not *Wissen* anymore: it is not *Wissen* in the same sense of *Wissen* that we encounter all the way through the phenomenological process; or, to put it in another way, with the structure of *absolutes Wissen*, Hegel reaches a new definition or a new sense of the term *Wissen*. In its general *intentional* structure, knowing is always 'knowing about' or 'knowing of' something ( '*Wissen von . . .*' ); i.e., it has a fundamentally *relational* form. All the way through the phenomenological process, *Wissen* has presented itself as the relation between *Ansich* and *Fürsich*, truth and certainty, consciousness and its object, consciousness and self-consciousness, the spirit and its world. At the level of 'absolute religion', knowing gained an 'absolute' *content*, and presented itself as consciousness's own relation to God's 'absolute being'. In the sphere of religion, however, the absolute object still presents itself as an independent reality in *relation to* consciousness. The 'absolute content' is still a self-subsistent 'content' that consciousness approaches in the 'form of representation' ( *Vorstellung* ).<sup>49</sup> The consciousness of God's absolute being is not yet consciousness of the absoluteness of the form of its knowledge.<sup>50</sup>

In the figure of 'absolute knowing', on the contrary, *Wissen* reaches the final *Aufhebung* of the very relation that, all along the phenomenological development, had been responsible for successively generating the multiplicity of its own figures. Now *Wissen* is the name of a structure that has sublated all relation as such, and thereby is in relation only to itself. Knowing is no longer related to an independent objectivity, but is rather the act or the form that produces every content out of itself. Absolute knowing is knowing of the pure 'concept' ( *Begriff* ); it is conceptual comprehension as *Begreifen überhaupt*<sup>51</sup> and

*begreifendes Wissen*.<sup>52</sup> Moving a step beyond religious consciousness, absolute knowing is 'absolute' *content* and 'absolute' *form* at the same time. The absolute content is now recognized to be the product of consciousness's own activity; the poetic, assimilating power of the 'concept' now takes the place of 'representation', while the 'self' is established in place of the 'otherness' that representation still needed to generate and to re-present between itself and its object.<sup>53</sup>

The homonymy in the structure of knowing is, at this stage, necessary in order to disclose a further meaning of the position of *absolutes Wissen* as the "last figure" of spirit.<sup>54</sup> It is the last one not only in the sense that it is the concluding one, if we look backwards to the already exhibited 'series' of consciousness's and spirit's own shapes; it is the last one also in the sense that *after* it, no other figure can be produced as a *phenomenological* figure.<sup>55</sup> In absolute knowing, spirit eventually "realizes its concept, and in this realization *it remains* in its concept" (*in seinem Begriffe bleibt*); i.e., it stays there, without going any further.<sup>56</sup> The dialectical movement is stilled, once absolute knowing gains the dimension of the concept. The act of acquiescing in the concept is a further sign of the truth and freedom attained by absolute knowing. It means to 'be-with-oneself-in-one's-otherness', which is possible only when to be *bei sich* is to be or to remain in the concept.<sup>57</sup> And it means to *know the truth* as the form in which self-certainty is perfectly equal to self-knowledge.<sup>58</sup> Even the famous statement of the preface that presents the 'true' in the form of a "Bacchanalian revel in which no member is not drunk" ends with the image of a "transparent and simple repose" in which that revel is recollected.<sup>59</sup> This "transparent and simple repose" is the same act of 'remaining in the concept' that is proper to *absolutes Wissen*.

The use of homonymy associated with the 'absolute' character of knowing is a general procedure of Hegel's dialectic that allows, at this point, the crucial transition from the *Phenomenology* to the *beginning* of the *Science of Logic*.<sup>60</sup> The systematic position of this chapter confirms that 'conceptual knowing' (*begreifendes Wissen*) is not *Wissen* (of consciousness) anymore, but rather a *Begreifen* that from now on will 'remain' in the concept; the 'knowing' that is still implied by 'conceptual comprehension' is nothing but the way in which *the con-*

*cept* knows itself as concept. In this way, phenomenological absolute knowing leads to the pure thinking of the *Logic* as the immanent construction of the forms of that *Begreifen*. More generally, the systematic position that Hegel always associates with the predication of 'absoluteness' represents both a moment of conclusion and the discrete caesura of a radically new beginning. Yet, since the caesura still describes the structure of cognition, Hegel's dialectical conclusion is the movement of a complete *Entäußerung*: to come to the limit beyond which one cannot proceed means to *know* one's limit: "The self-knowing spirit knows not only itself but also the negative of itself, or its limit: to *know* one's limit is to *know* how to sacrifice oneself (*Seine Grenze wissen, heißt sich aufzuopfern wissen*). This sacrifice is the externalization (*Entäußerung*)."<sup>61</sup>

- (D) Yet to be 'absolute' also means to inaugurate a *new use* of the structure in question. Hegel's use of homonymy amounts to the 'absolute freedom' of a thinking that has proved itself capable of reaching the standpoint from which alone 'absoluteness' can be predicated. One of the meanings of *absolutus* is entailed by its being the past participle of the Latin *absolvere*: to 'let go free' or to 'set free'.<sup>62</sup> Hegel recalls this meaning with the *frei entlassen* that appears both at the end of the *Phenomenology* and in the culmination of the *Logic*: it is the movement whereby thinking lets its creative and poetic power go free in its otherness, and in this way points out that the dimension of truth is at the same time the dimension of freedom. If the preface of the *Phenomenology* stated that "pure self-recognition in absolute otherness . . . is the ground and soil of science,"<sup>63</sup> it is only at the level of *absolutes Wissen* that consciousness really reaches the true meaning of freedom, and is found, accordingly, "in communion with itself in its otherness as such (*in seinem Anderssein als solchem bei sich*)."<sup>64</sup> In the 'total' structure of absolute knowing, the act of recollection (*Er-Innerung*) is complemented by an act of a radical externalization (*Äußerung*). In this way, the 'absoluteness' of absolute knowing points both to the *methodological* question that directly links the end of the *Phenome-*

nology to the end of the later *Science of Logic*, and to the *real-philosophische* question that opens up the ‘real’ dimensions of nature and history; a question that is posed both at the end of the *Phenomenology* and at the end of the *Logic*.

### Absolutes Wissen: Knowing, Cognition, and Concept, or From Substance to Subject

To this point, the ‘absoluteness’ of absolute knowing has been successively described (1) as the etymological fulfillment of the structure of the *ab-solutus*, (2) as the topological position of being the end or result of the process, (3), as the comprehensiveness that generates homonymy in Hegel’s uses of *Wissen*, and (4) as the transition thereby to a new beginning. We now have to briefly interrogate the figure of *absolutes Wissen* with regard to one last famous claim that Hegel presents in the preface:

In my view, which can be justified only by the exposition of the system itself, everything turns on grasping the true, not only as substance, but at the same time as subject (*das Wahre nicht als Substanz, sondern eben so sehr als Subjekt aufzufassen und auszudrücken*).<sup>65</sup>

It is, once again, a question of the way of expressing and presenting the ‘truth’ (or ‘the true’) of philosophical knowledge. We have seen in what sense the structures of absolute knowing verify the thesis that truth is the ‘whole’. Hegel suggests that the form of the whole of science is the actuality of the system.<sup>66</sup> Moreover, the statement “the true is actual only as system” represents only another way of saying that “substance is essentially subject” and this claim, in turn, is rendered by the “representation which expresses the Absolute as spirit.”<sup>67</sup> In this way, Hegel sets out a series of important programmatic terms in such a way that only at the level of *absolutes Wissen* will the intrinsic necessity of their interconnection eventually be shown. The constitution of substance as subject fulfils, for Hegel, the twofold systematic objective that we have been pursuing: on the one hand, it expresses the transformation of the metaphysical Absolute into the

absolute modality of philosophical knowledge; on the other hand, it provides a conclusive argument regarding the nature of philosophical *Wissen* as such. Hegel's contention is that the complete articulation of the structures of knowing leads to the transformation of substance into subject. Then "substantiality" is another name both for the "immediacy of knowing" (*Wissen*) and for the "immediacy" that being presents "for knowing."<sup>68</sup> This transformation and even 'transmutation' (*Verwandlung*) of substance into subject is a process of mediation that Hegel calls *Erkennen*. The whole process that constitutes 'spirit' and thereby leads to absolute knowing is described by Hegel as identical to the movement of cognition through experience. *Erkennen* "is the transmutation (*Verwandlung*) of that *Ansich* into that which is *Fürsich*, of substance into subject, of the object of consciousness into an object of self-consciousness, i.e., into an object that is just as much sublated (*aufgehobenen Gegenstand*), or into the concept."<sup>69</sup>

Hegel suggests here an interesting correlation between substance and subject, on the one side, and the notions of *Erkennen* and *Wissen*, on the other. Once the movement of cognition has been completed, the transformation of "substance into subject" establishes the final "truth of spirit."<sup>70</sup>

At this point however, a brief remark on Hegel's notions of *Erkennen* (cognition) and *Wissen* (knowledge) is in order. A fundamental principle of Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason* was the distinction between *Denken* and *Erkennen*. "In order to have cognition (*erkennen*) of an object what is required is that its possibility [i.e., real possibility] can be proved (either by testimony of experience out if its reality, or a priori by reason). However I can think (*denken*) whatever I want insofar as I do not contradict myself."<sup>71</sup> This principle is grounded on the discursive nature of human cognition that, in turn, also justifies the subjective nature of the modal distinction between possibility and reality. It implies that not all that I think can exist and be an object of cognition, and that, if all that I know exists (the concepts of the understanding have objective validity), not all that exists can be known. Against this view, Hegel contends that cognition is eventually coextensive with thinking. In a dialectical logic, the prin-

ciple of contradiction does not discriminate among the possibles in order to decide their actuality; nor does it need to assume an unknowable but yet thinkable 'thing in itself'. In the *Phenomenology*, Hegel's argument runs as follows: through the mediation of *finite cognition* (the successive epistemological devices to which consciousness resorts in the course of its experience), the immanent principle of the process shows itself to be *absolute cognition*. *Erkennen* is the relation of two sides: objectivity and subjectivity. The movement of cognition is the process through which the content is transferred from objectivity, or *Sein*, to subjectivity—to the *Selbst*.<sup>72</sup>

If we have a *cognition* of something, then we can also say that we *know* something, i.e., that the subject of that cognition has gained knowledge of something. More precisely, *Wissen* points to the fact that the cognizing subject not only has a cognition of the object but also *knows that she has that cognition*. The knowing subject knows that the object is constituted in the way reproduced by her cognition and its judgments. In other words, she knows that her cognition is true. *Wissen* is, therefore, the act according whereby the cognizing subject knows not only the object but also the truth of her cognition—i.e., the correspondence between her judgments and the object. *Certainty* (*Gewißheit*) is what transforms cognition into knowledge; *Wissen* is, as such, beyond the possibility of doubt. A system of cognitions that contains knowledge is called *science*. Method is the 'form' of the system of science. Given this conceptual framework, it might easily be expected that the chapter on *absolutes Wissen* should precisely entail this crucial transformation from substance into subject in the constitution of the 'system' of philosophical knowledge.

In a preparatory fragment for the last chapter of the *Phenomenology*, Hegel develops the notion of 'absolute knowing' as the identity of all preceding figures of consciousness's one-sided knowing and the cognition that spirit has of itself. He distinguishes three different notions of *Wissen*. First, knowing is something like the universal self-consciousness of one's own identity and being-for-oneself—the pure form of *Wissen*. Yet, since knowing always implies a relation to a content and hence a confrontation with a moment of reality and nega-

tivity, it is further determined as *Erkennen*. Finally, as total unity (*Ganzes*) of the two preceding meanings, knowing is *absolute knowing* and contains the structures of being and subjectivity—this is the “spirit that knows itself as spirit.”<sup>73</sup> Later on, in the *Science of Logic*, discussing the idea of truth, Hegel formulates the difference between *Wissen* and *Erkennen* in analogous terms. Theoretical cognition aims at ‘objective truth’, namely, at the ‘idea’ as correspondence of concept and reality, and formulates propositions on the truth or falsity of objects; knowing instead represents a more advanced stage in the logical development of truth, since it expresses the objective truth of the object “for or in the subjective concept.”<sup>74</sup> Knowing is the way in which cognition and its truth take place *for the idea*, and implies thereby the moment of self-knowing.

## NOTES

1. In what follows I have chosen to use, most of the time, the German *Wissen* instead of using the customary English translation, ‘knowing’, and the German *Erkennen* instead of the customary translation, ‘cognition’, because the translation seems to me artificial and not really able to reproduce the *Wissen/Erkennen* (knowing/cognition) distinction that is relevant to me in the present discussion. In addition, the English translation obscures the possibility, present in the German terminology, of taking the two terms both as nouns and as verbs. In any case, when I do use the English terminology, I follow the customary translation referred to above.

2. A terminological analysis of Hegel’s uses of ‘absolute’ can be found in J. Burbidge, “Hegel’s Absolutes,” in *The Owl of Minerva* 29, no. 1 (1997): 23–37. I agree with Burbidge’s analysis; however, he shows neither the reasons why Hegel would need his particular doctrine of the ‘absolute’ nor the necessity of it. A further discussion can be found in Angelica Nuzzo, *Logica e sistema: Sull’idea hegeliana di filosofia* (Geneva: Pantograf, 1992), pp. 293–331; and in Angelica Nuzzo, “The Idea of Method in Hegel’s Science of Logic,” in *Bulletin of the Hegel Society of Great Britain* 39/40 (1999) 1–18.

3. Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, *Differenz des Fichte’schen und Schelling’schen Systems der Philosophie in Gesammelte Werke* 4, Jenaer Kritische Schriften, ed. Hartmut Buchner and Otto Pöggeler (Hamburg:



F. Meiner, 1968), p. 16; hereafter cited as GW4. English translation, *The Difference between Fichte's and Schelling's System of Philosophy*, trans. H. S. Harris and W. Cerf (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1977), p. 94; hereafter cited as Dif. "Das Absolute soll fürs Bewußtsein konstruiert werde, ist die Aufgabe der Philosophie."

4. See *Phenomenology of Spirit*, §6. The *Phenomenology of Spirit* is quoted according to: Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, *Gesammelte Werke* 9, ed. Wolfgang Bonsiepen and Reinhard Heede (Hamburg: F. Meiner, 1968); hereafter cited as GW9. English translation: G. W. F. Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, trans. A. V. Miller (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977); cited hereafter as ET. For a more careful examination of these distinctions, see below, section 2.

5. See Hegel's polemic against 'immediate knowing', whose paradigmatic expression is Friedrich Heinrich Jacobi, remains an important topic for the later Hegel; see the discussion of 'immediate knowing' in the "Positions of Thinking toward Objectivity" that open the *Encyclopedia* §§ 61–78 (*Vorbegriff*).

6. GW9 p. 12; ET, §6.

7. GW9, p. 10; ET, p. 87.

8. GW9, p. 14; ET, §10.

9. GW9, p. 12; ET, §6; GW9, p. 428; ET, §798.

10. An analogous claim regarding the 'actuality' of science had already been presented by Fichte against Kant: see *Ueber den Begriff der Wissenschaftslehre oder der sogenannten Philosophie*, in Johann Gottlieb Fichte, *Sämtliche Werke*, ed. Immanuel Hermann Fichte (Berlin: Veit, 1845–1856), vol. 1, p. 44. English translation: "Concerning the Concept of the *Wissenschaftslehre* or the So-Called Philosophy," in Fichte, *Early Philosophical Writings*, trans. Daniel Breazeale (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1988), p. 105.

11. On Hegel's 'historicism' in the *Phenomenology*, among the more recent contributions, see Tom Rockmore, *Cognition: An Introduction to Hegel's Phenomenology of Spirit* (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1997); M. Forster, *Hegel's Idea of a Phenomenology of Spirit* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998); G. Baptist, "Das absolute Wissen: Zeit, Geschichte, Wissenschaft," in G. W. F. Hegel: *Phänomenologie des Geistes*, *Klassiker Auslegen*, ed. Otto Pöggeler (Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 1998), pp. 243–59; for the different meanings of 'history' in the last chapter of the *Phenomenology*, among the rich literature on this topic, see Joseph Flay, "The History of Philosophy and the *Phenomenology of Spirit*," in *Hegel and the His-*

*tory of Philosophy*. Proceedings of the 1972 Hegel Society of America Conference, ed. John O'Malley, K. W. Algozin, and Fr. G. Weiss (The Hague: Nijhoff, 1974), pp. 47–61; P. J. Labarrière, “La sursomption du temps et le vrai sens de l'histoire conçu. Comment gérer cet héritage hégélien?” in *Revue de Métaphysique et de Morale* 84 (1979): 92–100. Crucial for the analysis of all aspects of the *Phenomenology* is H. S. Harris, *Hegel's Ladder*, 2 vols. (Indianapolis and Cambridge: Hackett, 1997).

12. GW9, p. 430; ET, §803.

13. GW9, p. 17; ET, §16.

14. GW9, p. 17; ET, §16.

15. GW9, p. 17; ET, §16.

16. Cf. H. M. Baumgartner, “Die Bestimmung des Absoluten. Ein Strukturvergleich der Reflexionsformen bei J. G. Fichte und Plotin,” in *Zeitschrift für philosophische Forschung* 34 (1980): 321–42; D. Henrich, “Andersheit und Absolutheit des Geistes: Sieben Schritte auf dem Weg von Schelling zu Hegel,” in *Selbstverhältnisse. Gedanken und Auslegungen zu den Grundlagen der klassischen deutschen Philosophie* (Stuttgart: Reclam, 1982), pp. 142–73.

17. See Burbidge, “Hegel's Absolutes.”

18. The *absolutus* in this sense corresponds to the ‘thing in itself’, as that which is outside all relation to thinking and knowing.

19. Immanuel Kant, *Kritik der reinen Vernunft*, in *Kant's gesammelte Schriften*, vol. 3, ed. Königlich Preussischen Akademie der Wissenschaften (Berlin: G. Reimer, 1902), B 381–82; hereafter cited as KdrV.

20. Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, *Gesammelte Werke* 5, *Schriften und Entwüfe*, ed. Friedrich Hoegemann and Christoph Jamme (Hamburg: F. Meiner, 1990), “Die Idee des absoluten Wesens,” p. 262; hereafter cited as GW5.

21. GW 5, p. 262.

22. GW9, p. 19; ET, §20.

23. GW9, p. 22; ET, §25.

24. GW9, p. 19; ET, §20.

25. For a further discussion of this point, and of the relation between ‘result’ and ‘absoluteness’, see below.

26. See Nuzzo, “The Idea of Method.”

27. At the level of the preface we (and Hegel) know that the Absolute is *absolutes Wissen* only for the extrinsic reason that the preface was composed after the body of the *Phenomenology* was written.

28. For the discussion of this pedagogical task, see M. Forster, *Hegel's*

*Idea of a Phenomenology of Spirit* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998), pt. 1, chap. 2.

29. GW9, pp. 22–23; ET, §26, my italics.

30. GW9, p. 23; ET, §26.

31. See also GW9, p. 22; ET, §26.

32. GW9, p. 429; ET, §802. The “becoming of science” is the “self-becoming” of the Absolute, which in turn is the “becoming of what spirit is in itself.”

33. GW9, p. 432; ET, §806: “Science contains within itself this necessity of externalizing the form of the concept, and it contains the *passage of the concept into consciousness (den Übergang des Begriffes ins Bewußtsein)*” (my emphasis).

34. GW9, p. 56; ET, §78; my emphasis.

35. GW9, p. 19; ET, §20: “The true is the whole.”

36. GW9, p. 57; ET, §80: “*leidet eben so Gewalt von der Vernunft.*”

37. GW9, p. 57; ET, §80.

38. Georg Friedrich Wilhelm Hegel, *Wissenschaft der Logik*, in *Werke* 5, ed. E. Moldenhauer and K. M. Michel (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1971), p. 43; hereafter cited as WL1 (= vol. 5) and WL2 (= vol. 6). English translation: Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, *Science of Logic*, trans. A. V. Miller (Atlantic Highlands, N.J.: Humanities Press, 1969), p. 49; hereafter cited as *Logic*.

39. GW9, p. 56; ET, §78.

40. Martin Heidegger, “Hegels Begriff der Erfahrung,” in *Holzwege* (Frankfurt am Main: Klostermann, 1980).

41. For a detailed discussion of how these same formal characters of ‘absoluteness’ work in the last chapter of the *Science of Logic*, see Nuzzo, *Logicae Sistema*.

42. In this sense, as Quentin Lauer suggests, we can really read the *absolutes Wissen* chapter as the introduction to a “second reading of the whole *Phenomenology*.” See Quentin Lauer, *A Reading of Hegel’s Phenomenology of Spirit* (New York: Fordham University Press, 1976), p. 256.

43. GW9, p. 422; ET, §788. For the difference between this ‘recollection’ at the beginning of *absolutes Wissen* and the one that opens the Religion chapter and the Spirit chapter, see Baptist, “Das absolute Wissen,” p. 245; for the Religion chapter, see M. de la Maza, *Knoten und Bund: Zum Verhältnis von Logik, Geschichte, und Religion in Hegels Phänomenologie des Geistes* (Bonn: Bouvier, 1998).

44. GW9, p. 433; ET, §808; see the reference to the *erinnern* that ‘We’ need to exercise at the beginning of *absolutes Wissen* in GW9, p. 423; ET, §790.

45. Cf. J. Loewenberg, *Hegel's Phenomenology: Dialogues on the Life of the Mind* (La Salle, Ill.: Open Court, 1965), p. 358.

46. GW9, p. 429; ET, §801, my emphasis.

47. *Enzklopädie der philosophischen Wissenschaften im Grundrisse in Gesammelte Werke* 20, ed. Wolfgang Bonsiepen, Hans Christian Lucas, and Udo Rameil (Hamburg: F. Meiner, 1992), §415 Amn.

48. This is the meaning of the 'recollection' of all previous figures of consciousness and spirit that takes place in the chapter I am analyzing. For a more detailed account, see K. A. Scheier, *Analytischer Kommentar zu Hegels Phänomenologie des Geistes: Die Architektonik des erscheinenden Wissens* (Freiburg and Munich: Alber, 1980), pp. 652 ff.; Baptist, "Das absolute Wissen," pp. 244–47.

49. GW9, p. 426; ET, §796; also GW9, p. 427; ET, §797.

50. See Lauer, *Reading*, p. 257.

51. GW9, p. 428; ET, §800.

52. GW9, p. 427; ET, §798; see GW9, p. 422; ET, §795, where Hegel underlines the fact that it is precisely the form a *reine[s] Begreifen des Gegenstandes* that had not been reached before the level of *absolutes Wissen*.

53. GW9, p. 427; ET, §797.

54. GW9, p. 427; ET, §798.

55. GW9, p. 425; ET, §794: here the *Reihe der Gestaltungen des Geistes* comes to its conclusion; it is *beschließt*.

56. GW9, p. 427; ET, §798, my emphasis.

57. GW9, p. 422; ET, §788, literally repeated in GW9, p. 428; ET, §799.

58. GW9, p. 427; ET, §798.

59. GW9, p. 35; ET, §47.

60. What I call 'homonymy' in this chapter has also been analyzed as *Bedeutungsverschiebung* (i.e., as the procedure of generating different meanings for the same concept in the *Logic*) by H. F. Fulda, "Unzulängliche Bemerkungen zur Dialektik," in *Seminar: Dialektik in der Philosophie Hegels*, ed. R. P. Horstmann (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1978), pp. 33–70 (see also the other contributions in this volume).

61. GW9, p. 433; ET, §808.

62. Rockmore, *Cognition*, p. 180.

63. GW9, p. 22; ET, §26.

64. GW9, p. 422; ET, §788; also GW9, p. 428; ET, §799. This is Hegel's general definition of freedom.

65. GW9, p. 18; ET, §17.

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66. GW9, p. 22; ET, §25.
  67. The whole passage is in GW9, p. 22; ET, §25.
  68. GW9, p. 22; ET, §25.
  69. GW9, p. 429; ET, §802.
  70. GW9, p. 429; ET, §802.
  71. KdrV B xxvi f. Anm.
  72. GW9, p. 428; ET, §801.
  73. Fragment: C. *Die Wissenschaft*, in G. W. F. Hegel, *Phänomenologie des Geistes* (Hamburg: F. Meiner, 1988), pp. 535–46; see also W. Bonsiepen, “Zur Datierung und Interpretation des Fragments C. Die Wissenschaft,” in *Hegel-Studien* 12 (1977): 179–90.
  74. WL2, p. 499; Logic, p. 784.



# RECONCILIATION VERSUS REVERSAL

*Hegel and Nietzsche on Overcoming Sin or Ontological Guilt*

RICHARD S. FINDLER

Ontological guilt, which is referred to as original sin in religious circles, is the guilt for one's being. It has been around for a few millennia and continues to permeate contemporary society, regardless of the many critiques and attempts to overcome it. Although sin has a religious context, it is the secular manifestations that I find to be more influential and more insidious today than the religious manifestations within Western society, and particularly within American society.

Within cultural and philosophical contexts, ontological guilt exercises a powerful force. Culturally, groups of people are held responsible for acts for which they have nothing to do with, simply because of their gender, genetic code, or ancestral lineage. They are considered to be guilty for being who they are, and the guilt results from either a materialistic or a biologicistic standpoint. Moreover, these groups cannot dispel the guilt, since they cannot get rid of their genetic struc-

ture or ancestral lineage, and hence they are guilty for as long as they exist. This interpretation of responsibility is merely a mode of secularized original sin, which continues to haunt our existence.

In philosophical circles, particularly in continental philosophy, ontological guilt, while not materialistically or biologically interpreted, plays a major role in the thought of Martin Heidegger, Jean-Paul Sartre, Emmanuel Levinas, and Jacques Derrida. These thinkers claim that guilt is necessary for existence and that there is an indispensable connection between guilt and responsibility.<sup>1</sup> Their claims are in need of critical analysis. But to invoke a sense of secularized original sin, or ontological guilt, to produce responsibility does nothing to solve the problems we confront today, since it does nothing to instill a real sense of responsibility for the acts, and it merely repeats a problem that has been harmful for millennia. For our benefit, I believe the problem of ontological guilt needs to be reconsidered and solved.

Thus what I am really interested in within the problem of ontological guilt is a way to overcome ontological guilt, to dispel it, and this leads me to two thinkers who have dealt with this problem, Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel and Friedrich Nietzsche. In the *Phenomenology of Spirit*, Hegel presents a sense of reconciliation (*Versöhnung*) as a way to overcome sin, while in *On the Genealogy of Morals*, Nietzsche presents a sense of reversal (*Umkehrung*) as the way to overcome sin. I have chosen to compare Hegel and Nietzsche on this issue because both present a dialectical interpretation of sin, yet they end up with very different findings regarding sin and how to overcome it. To make the comparison, I focus specifically on Hegel's understanding of revealed religion in the *Phenomenology* and on Nietzsche's second essay on guilt and related issues in the *Genealogy of Morals*. I will present their dialectical interpretations of sin and the ways they see to overcome it, and then I will contrast their views.

Before I begin with Hegel's dialectical interpretation of sin, I want to note that neither Hegel nor Nietzsche should be read as religious thinkers or as theologians, since they do not make faith the basis for the acceptance of truth in their thought. Yet religious thought, particularly Christianity, exercised a major influence on their



philosophies, in the sense that both saw the need for overcoming Christianity. Hegel saw the need for overcoming Christianity, which he refers to as revealed religion, in terms of a sublation (*Aufhebung*) of it, while Nietzsche saw the need for overcoming Christianity in terms of curing a disease, or in terms of a lie that needed to be exposed and corrected. What I find especially interesting is the way that both thinkers recognize that guilt and sin must be overcome, albeit in different ways.

## I. HEGEL'S DIALECTICAL INTERPRETATION OF SIN

Within a religious context, sin and evil are related in the sense that sin is the reason for evil's existence. Hence, within a Hegelian framework, sin stands as the truth of evil. Even moral evil, which Hegel recognizes, is subordinate to religious evil and cannot be properly grasped until we understand religion. Therefore religion is the place to come to understand sin and its overcoming.<sup>2</sup>

Though sin is a spiritual phenomenon, evil and sin cannot *explicitly* enter the world until spirit actually shows itself as spirit. In other words, evil as such does not enter the world until one becomes aware that the world and spirit are interrelated. According to Hegel, consciousness cannot understand sin until it becomes aware of its spirituality and does so in a particular mode.

Nonetheless, as long as negation has been present, which has been since Sense-Certainty in the *Phenomenology*, evil has been present. In the early stages of consciousness, evil and sin exist in an implicit sense as negativity, even if they are not grasped in their essential spirituality.

Hegel recognizes the presence of evil and sin as early as the introduction to the *Phenomenology*, when he speaks about the incompleteness of consciousness in terms of death, violence, and restlessness. He even says that reason finds this incompleteness "*not* to be good" and in need of being overcome.<sup>3</sup> In other words, evil and sin are present, but since consciousness is undergoing its own experience

on the way to the realization of spirit in terms of absolute knowing, what is not complete, or what is evil and sinful, needs to be overcome. But for evil and sin to be overcome, they must become known for what they are.

Since evil and sin are spiritual phenomena, their overcoming must arise in a mode of spirit that has come to know itself as spirit, and knows itself in an almost complete sense. The place where Hegel sees evil and sin beginning to be overcome is in the sphere of religious consciousness. Consciousness cannot attain absolute knowing, where sin and evil receive their full sublation, without first passing through the realm of religion since it is there that spirit comes to self-consciousness. Further, absolute knowing only recapitulates on the level of the concept what has already been revealed in the prior modes of consciousness, and, according to Hegel, consciousness recognizes the overcoming of evil and sin in its religious phase.

While sin and evil are overcome within religious consciousness, it is not until we enter the sphere of revealed religion that the revelation of the overcoming arises because in revealed religion the divine being receives incarnation as a self-conscious being. In other words, the divine being becomes "known as Spirit."<sup>4</sup> For this to happen, the divine nature must become human, so that what is revealed to consciousness is "God immediately present as Spirit."<sup>5</sup> The movement of the divine into self-consciousness means that the separation of subject and substance is overcome.

What revealed religion represents or depicts, however, is one man (Christ) as divine. Yet, as Hegel notes, the purpose of this representation is to reveal to the community which is conscious of the human-divine connection that divinity belongs to the community and that the divine and the human are not to remain separate. Hence spirit moves dialectically from the recognition of the representation of the divine human being as the man-god to the fact that all can participate within spirit and are a part of spirit. This realization can occur only on the level of the concept, where the religious consciousness becomes known in its truth.

Within the sphere of revealed religion, the overcoming occurs on the level of representation rather than the level of conceptual

thought. Hence, what is represented in this sphere is still incomplete. A. V. Miller translates *Vorstellen* as "picture-thinking," and in a way his translation makes sense because the movement of the absolute within revealed religion takes place in terms of metaphor and images; i.e., images of nature and paternity represent the movement of spirit. Nonetheless what Hegel wants to show is the dialectical movement of spirit, and since representational thought conceals conceptual thinking, Hegel makes spirit's movement explicit in the realm of revealed religion by revealing its truth.<sup>6</sup>

In Hegel's view, spirit has "three distinct moments: essence, being for itself, which is the otherness of essence and for which essence is, and being-for-self, or the knowledge of itself *in the other*."<sup>7</sup> For spirit to attain completeness, it must pass through all three moments. The problem for representational thought is that it remains on the level of imagery, hence on the level of nature, and does not understand the necessary connection between the moments. So to grasp the necessary moments, one must move to the level of concept.

Nonetheless, revealed religion does depict the three moments and the movement of spirit, even if the movement occurs on the level of representation. To make up for revealed religion's lack, Hegel provides a conceptual interpretation of what occurs in revealed religion. Thereby he shows what, in his view, is really taking place within the sphere of revealed religion.

As Hegel presents the issue, essence, or what is in itself, remains abstract, and what is abstract contains within itself its negation. Through its negation what is abstract must achieve concretion, which is essence's other, and this requires that spirit externalize itself, i.e., negate its abstraction. However, once this separation of what is essential and what is being-for-itself takes place, the separation must be overcome and essence and being-for-itself must be reconciled. As Hegel puts it, essence must externalize itself through its "word [*logos*—my interpretation] which, when uttered, leaves behind, externalized and emptied, him who uttered it, but which is as immediately heard, and only this hearing of its own self is the existence of the world. Thus the distinctions made are immediately resolved (*aufgelöst*) as soon as they are made and are made as soon as they are

resolved, and what is true and actual is precisely this immanent circular movement.”<sup>8</sup>

In terms of revealed religion, this means that God, who is initially isolated, must externalize itself through its own creative act, which Hegel interprets as the word, and which I interpret as reason or *logos*. Once the externalization occurs, consciousness must come to see that this separation of what is created from its creator must come back to itself in such a way that the two recognize their essential unity. Hegel even claims that this recognition must be one that results from love, since through love all opposition is reconciled.<sup>9</sup>

These modes and movement of spirit are represented in revealed religion in terms of creation, fall, and redemption, which revealed religion understands as real events, but which are in truth only moments of spirit. According to revealed religion, the essence, or God/spirit, becomes another by concretizing itself and entering “directly into *immediate* existence.”<sup>10</sup> Spirit enters immediate existence directly when it “*creates* a world,” wherein what spirit was as being-in-itself now becomes “being-for-another.”<sup>11</sup> This creation by spirit does not result in a merely substantial world, but in a world that possesses spirit, since God wants to see itself within the world, and as such, God is reflected back to itself. On the one hand, the word (*logos*) that creates the world is echoed back to spirit, and, on the other hand, when spirit looks into the world it created, it sees itself. Hence a sense of the self-presence of spirit arises through echoing and reflection.

Since spirit is a self and not merely a substance, this self-presence of spirit requires that the self be “equally present in the world.”<sup>12</sup> Thus spirit must be present in the world as an individual self, or an “existent spirit.”<sup>13</sup>

Hegel considers this first manifestation of existent spirit in its immediacy as not being aware of itself as spirit. This immediacy is a state of innocence, i.e., the existent spirit is “*unschuldig*”—neither guilty nor sinful.<sup>14</sup> Hence, good and evil are not grasped within immediacy. In revealed religion, this condition is depicted as the Garden of Eden, or paradise.

It is only when this immediate spirit becomes “an ‘other’ to its own self” and comes to know itself that separation occurs and good

and evil arise.<sup>15</sup> Hegel considers this advent of knowledge, which is equivalent to the movement out of "sense-consciousness into consciousness of thought," as the existent spirit's "withdrawal into itself or self-centeredness."<sup>16</sup> It is as if the awareness of the self as no longer innocent gives rise to good and evil. Evil shows itself as the result of the awareness of a loss and separation, while good shows itself as the need to be reconciled with what was lost. This is revealed religion's depiction of the fall from paradise.

Since the existent spirit is a human being and the human being recognizes him or herself as cut off from what is essential, evil becomes understood in terms of what generates the separation, which in this case is the human's self-centeredness and his or her "natural existence."<sup>17</sup> Hence, the existent spirit conceives or thinks of nature as evil and conceives of what is separate from nature, which is spirit or God, as good. For revealed religion, this understanding results in a separation of nature and grace. Since both sides are in fact spiritual, however, what we end up with is an alienation of spirit from itself, and the alienation must be overcome.

Since both opposed and alienated sides possess spirit, both sides of the antithesis must resolve the opposition between them if spirit is to gain unity. This means that the divine spirit must enter into its creation in a self-conscious manner, and that the existent spirit, or the human being, must assume the divine spirit. In revealed religion, this takes place in two ways: first, when the divine spirit allows itself to be incarnated and suffers its incarnation by living and dying; and second, when the human being acquires divinity through overcoming death, or through resurrection. In this sense, particular existence is sublated and universal existence is reconciled with particularity. Hence, what is divine and human, or what creates and what is created, recognize each other and overcome their opposition. Revealed religion depicts this reconciliation through the image of Christ, the Son of God, who dies and is resurrected. Mere natural existence, represented in death, is overcome, and thereby nature and grace receive reconciliation through the sublation of nature into its spirituality. What I have represented on the level of revealed religion is spirit's self-reconciliation.

What this sublation results in is the recognition of the universality

of spirit, in the sense that everyone who has recognized this movement in revealed religion can now partake of spirit. After all, Christ died for our sins and the opposition has been overcome. Hence a community, or universal self-consciousness, of all spiritual beings arises. This communal recognition is depicted in revealed religion through the guise of the Holy Spirit.

Granted that the religious community still makes a separation between spirit and humanity, the community recognizes the possibility of reconciliation in the future. As a result, revealed religion lays the groundwork for the community to conceptualize this spiritual activity and to come to know spirit within itself. At such a point the community becomes self-conscious.

Given this movement of the self-reconciliation of spirit in revealed religion, my question is, how does Hegel reconcile sin or evil? The problem with representational thought in revealed religion is that it understands the moments of spirit as real events that have taken place and that remain separate from each other historically. The religious consciousness does not see that these events are in truth only moments of spirit undergoing its own movement of reconciliation. As a result of this limitation, revealed religion sees evil as something external to spirit/God, instead of grasping evil as belonging to spirit; i.e., sin or evil is only one of spirit's moments.<sup>18</sup>

Hegel's idea regarding sin or evil is simple, but unique and somewhat heretical within Christian theological circles since his claim is that evil is not something separate from God/spirit but only a moment of spirit. Thus overcoming sin or evil, which is self-centeredness and natural existence, is a possibility that belongs to spirit internally. Hence, reconciling sin with goodness simply involves self-reconciliation. So while I am sinful in my very being, I am also good in my very being. Thus I have within me, as a spiritual being, the ability to reconcile good and evil within myself once I become aware of myself as self-conscious, spiritual being.<sup>19</sup>

Good and evil are both merely "suspended moments—evil in general is self-centered being-for-self, and goodness is what is simple and without a self."<sup>20</sup> Since good and evil are only moments of spirit, "the truth is just their movement" into their unity.<sup>21</sup> Natural existence is

drawn to spirit and reconciled to it, since natural existence is, through the existent spirit, only a mode of spirit to begin with, albeit a mode of alienated spirit. Hence, natural existence is not essentially evil but is only a moment of spirit where the unity of nature and spirit is not grasped, a moment that spirit must pass through on its way to unity.

Sin is only a moment that spirit passes through because sin already requires knowledge of itself as sin, and hence, as thought, sin is already mediated. As Hegel points out, natural existence in its immediacy is not evil; it is the withdrawal into self-centeredness that results in sin, which is a mode of mediation. This “*thought* of evil” is “recognized as the first moment of reconciliation” since the mediation is present.<sup>22</sup> What we end up with is that “the *knowledge* of nature is the untrue existence of spirit, and this immanently developed universality of the self is *in itself* the reconciliation of spirit with itself.”<sup>23</sup>

Spirit is sinful only in its lack of completion and is good only in its attempt to overcome this lack. Thus good and evil or sin are not absolute standards but only moments of spirit on the way to its truth. I am sinful, or guilty for my being, only as long as I do not grasp the reconciliation, which is what I do once I become self-conscious spirit. In effect, the reconciliation of good and evil is the sublation of good and evil.

## 2. NIETZSCHE'S GENEALOGY OF SIN

Unlike the Hegelian dialectical method that seeks out both the spiritual origin and the *telos* of moral and religious concepts, Nietzsche employs a genealogical method to seek out the origin of sin and to seek ways to overcome it. The purpose of a genealogical analysis for Nietzsche is to expose the historical and empirical origins (*Herkunft*, not *Ursprung* or *Anfang*) of our moral concepts, or “moral prejudices.”<sup>24</sup> To accomplish this, the genealogist searches for what gives rise to our accepted moral values, which he or she tends to find in nonmoral phenomena. The genealogist then offers a “critique of moral values” by exposing their concealed nonmoral origin and calls the accepted moral values into question.<sup>25</sup>

In the second essay in the *Genealogy of Morals*, entitled "'Guilt,' 'Bad Conscience,' and the Like," Nietzsche performs a genealogical analysis of bad conscience or guilt, which he considers to be a *tiefe Erkrankung*, a deep or entrenched illness (translated as "serious illness") that resulted from our move into a social order and that we suffer from today.<sup>26</sup> In effect, bad conscience is a social disease that we have not cured.

In Nietzsche's view, bad conscience is the result of a long process of breeding in the human animal an active memory capable of making promises and keeping them. The genealogical analysis of bad conscience is the unveiling of "the long history of the origin (descent) of responsibility," a history Nietzsche refers to as an *ungeheuren Arbeit*, a labor both "tremendous" and monstrous.<sup>27</sup>

The history of bad conscience begins with our entry into a domestic social order, which Nietzsche considers to have been a very stressful "fundamental change" for the human animal, since the domestic process involved an attempt to alter natural human tendencies.<sup>28</sup> Without the move into a domestic social order, bad conscience would not have been possible.

As uncovered in the genealogical analysis, social organization, or what Nietzsche calls *die Staat*, was produced by those strong enough to take the formless, nomadic populace and form them into a cohesive whole. Nietzsche calls these strong ones the masters, and considers them to be "unconscious artists" born to create the state and expend their energy in the service of their "instinctive creation."<sup>29</sup> This expenditure of energy is external.

The masters are motivated by their will to power, or what Nietzsche refers to as their active forces. In general, a force is an expression of power, a "driving, willing, effecting," and it is not something substantial that drives, wills, or effects.<sup>30</sup> We come to know forces only through their expression. For example, there is no such thing as a strong person who is not strong, as if strength were merely a choice of the strong person. Instead, we say someone is strong who expresses strength, and to separate the doer from the action is a "fiction."<sup>31</sup>

Specifically, an active force is merely an expression of power that is dominant and formative, and an active force must express or dis-



charge itself in its own way. Hence wherever there is an active force, there is also its discharge and expenditure. Nietzsche refers to these active forces as an "instinct for (of) freedom," or as "the will to power,"<sup>32</sup> and these forces include "hostility," "cruelty," and "an intense pleasure in persecution, assault, change, and destruction."<sup>33</sup> The masters possess the instinct for freedom, discharge their active forces freely or without limit, and transform what they encounter.

The masters do not manifest bad conscience because they expend their active forces externally. Their activity, however, creates the space where bad conscience can grow, and Nietzsche sees a connection between active forces and bad conscience. The reason for this has to do with the way the active forces are expressed within a social order. An active force must express itself since that is all it can do. But its mode of expression can be restricted and redirected. Restriction and redirection are the results of reactive forces. Reactive forces are never superior to active forces since all that reaction can do is modify an action, i.e., "separate active force from what it can do."<sup>34</sup> Social organization is a mode of restriction and is reactive. The reason for society's restrictive nature is simple: what brings social cohesion into the world, that is, the external discharge of the active forces and the pleasure received from doing so, can also destroy social cohesion if the active forces continue to externalize themselves in an unreserved manner. Hence, the active forces must be restricted and redirected if the social order is to remain intact.

One way to redirect the active forces is to use them to subdue the masses and to make them acquiesce to the social order. This process of education involves punishment, and through punishment, the active forces find a modified externalization. It is the right of the masters to exact punishment, and the genealogy of bad conscience includes an analysis of the history of punishment. Punishment arises out of the creditor/debtor relationship, which is the basic form of the social order, and results in the development of law and justice. In fact, one element of Nietzsche's analysis shows how punishment, which is extremely cruel and severe in early societies due to their tenuous character, becomes more moderate as active memory is burned into the people and the social order becomes secure. Nonetheless, the

infliction of pain was the way the active memory was formed and the history of justice is revealed as the history of pain and punishment.

We must keep in mind that modern sensibility wants to shy away from this history since we find it repugnant to see ourselves in this light. We must recall, however, that there is an intense pleasure taken in cruelty, and punishment has an element of pleasure in it. As Nietzsche points out, "there is so much that is *festive*" in punishment.<sup>35</sup>

Nietzsche's reason for disclosing the history of justice as the history of punishment and the creation of active memory is not to bemoan a lost time and hence to return to an age in which we make punishment festive again. In fact, Nietzsche sees the *telos* of justice in terms of mercy. Mercy involves the "self-overcoming (*sich selbst aufhebend*) of justice," lies "beyond the law," and is the "privilege of the most powerful."<sup>36</sup> The creation of a social order that is based on mercy is so strong that even the most heinous crimes cannot eradicate it, and the criminals do not even need to be punished.

Instead, Nietzsche's point in disclosing this history is to show how the active forces are essential to the creation of the social order and how punishment still involves a modified externalization of these active forces. In light of this finding, Nietzsche argues effectively against punishment as the origin of bad conscience.

While society arises out of active forces, it is a reactive force and limits the external expression of the active forces. Nonetheless, an active force must discharge itself, and if it cannot do so externally, then it will do so internally. In other words, the active forces turn against us, or, more properly, we direct them against ourselves. *In this internalization lies the origin of bad conscience.* As Nietzsche says, the "instinct for freedom pushed back and repressed, incarcerated within and finally able to discharge and vent itself on itself: that, and that alone is what the *bad conscience* is in its beginnings (*Anbeginn*)."<sup>37</sup>

Nietzsche likens the illness of bad conscience to "pregnancy," and I can make sense of this analogy only by noting that bad conscience has a gestation period, in which a growth occurs, and gives birth in its most monstrous form at some point in time. In other words, the pregnancy is bad conscience's genealogy, and its history involves the way the creditor/debtor relationship influences moral and religious development.

Briefly, Nietzsche shows in the analysis how indebtedness to one's ancestors, or to the past generations responsible for a people's existence, results in a series of debt payments to the ancestors. The ancestors function as creditors, and the more the ancestral tree grows, the more one owes to the past generations and the more one must pay back. Eventually, repayment takes the form of turning the ancestors into gods. As the gods' power increases, the debt and the payback also increase. The apex of this development lies in generating one omnipotent god to whom one owes everything. Thus the history involves the creation of the gods as creditors and the concentration of more power in a lesser number of gods over time. The genealogical analysis follows the movement from polytheism to monotheism, and it is not dissimilar to Hegel's movement in religion from natural religion to revealed religion except that in Nietzsche's analysis, an economic concern and not strictly a spiritual concern motivate the religious movement.

The movement of this history is produced by a feeling of guilt, which is only a "consciousness of indebtedness."<sup>38</sup> You try to repay the debt because you owe something to the ancestors or gods, but you also feel guilty for being in debt. The more the ancestral tree grows or the power of the gods increases, the more indebtedness you accrue, the more guilt you feel, and the more you have to pay back. As a result of this spiraling process, you increase the payment to appease the feeling of guilt, but the guilt grows as the payment grows. Quantitative growth gives rise to qualitative change, since the more indebted you become, the more you alter your life and beliefs to accommodate the debt.

Given this spiral, you can see why the breeding of an active memory is essential to guilt. If you do not have a memory of your indebtedness, then you do not see any need for repayment. But the creditors require repayment, and hence an active memory becomes essential to the process.

As long as you believe that you can make a repayment, you can appease the feeling of guilt. For some cultures, repayment required mass human sacrifice; while for other cultures, offers of food and animal sacrifice sufficed. Perhaps the ancient Greeks were the most clever in this context because they were able to make their gods assume their guilt, while the Greeks assumed only the punishment for their actions.

The history of bad conscience, however, is only in its gestation period until we get to Christianity, the *telos* of monotheism, since it proved to be the phenomenon that drove the active forces totally inward and revealed bad conscience in "its most terrible and most sublime height."<sup>39</sup> In other words, it is in Christianity that guilt and debt find their true *Moralisierung*, or process of moralization.<sup>40</sup> Within Western culture, no more complete god has been produced than the Christian God, and we are the most indebted to the most powerful god. What makes Christianity unique in the history of bad conscience is that it sets up a condition that makes repayment impossible. On the one hand, it turns the "primal ancestor," Adam, into a debtor through original sin and hence not someone we can be indebted to and pay back.<sup>41</sup> On the other hand, the creditor himself "sacrifices himself for his debtor," and does so "out of love for his debtor."<sup>42</sup> Here lies the true evil genius of Christianity, for once a god sacrifices himself for you, no repayment can ever be adequate. One stands guilty forever.

What we are made to feel guilty about is the fact that we never can be gods due to our humanness, i.e., due to our animal, or bodily, natures. Hence, we are made to feel guilty or indebted for being natural beings. Since we can never escape our natural being, we must punish ourselves. Here is where we internalize the active forces in all their fury against us and torment ourselves for being who we are. You simply cannot atone for being who you are, and if you are made to feel guilty for being who you are, then the punishment has to be unending. "Guilt before God" becomes a hostility against the self, a "will to self-torment."<sup>43</sup> It is a tremendous "unnaturalness," and a "madness of the will."<sup>44</sup> In Nietzsche's view, we moderns have been the "heirs of the conscience-vivisection and self-cruelty to animals for millennia."<sup>45</sup> Of course, we are the animals Nietzsche refers to in this context.

Given this genealogy, one would think that the cure for this madness would lie in the diminishing power of the Christian God in Western culture, and Nietzsche does say that "atheism and a kind of *second innocence* (*Unschuld*) belong together."<sup>46</sup> Yet, Nietzsche's sense of atheism also requires an antinihilism, an attempt to overcome the will to nothingness, since bad conscience appears in any

place where the will to nothingness takes hold, regardless of whether it is in Western or Eastern cultures.

Hence, any self-proclaimed atheism that continues to see existence as an illness has not escaped the “madhouse” (*Irrenhaus*) of bad conscience.<sup>47</sup> Further, all the modern genealogy of bad conscience, or ontological guilt, reveals is that we have substituted other phenomena for the Christian God, such as the moral law, sympathetic reason and unegoistic action, the politics of victimization, political correctness, and the notion of infinite responsibility for the other.

What might solve the problem of ontological guilt is a mode of *reversal* that would “wed the bad conscience to all the *unnatural* inclinations, all those aspirations to the beyond, to that which runs counter to sense, instinct, nature, animality, in short all ideals hitherto, which are one and all hostile to life and ideals that slander the world.”<sup>48</sup> In other words, we should feel guilty about what we direct bad conscience at today, namely, our denial of life. At least initially, Nietzsche wants to make sin, or ontological guilt, into something we should feel guilty about feeling or experiencing. The goal of reversal, however, is the eradication of sin.

Such a reversal requires great strength and “great health.”<sup>49</sup> But in a decadent age, Nietzsche sees the possibility as reserved for a future time that can again affirm life and not deny it. This type of person who is to come is the type of person capable of *Erlösung*, a type capable of *releasing* life from unnatural inclinations and capable of reversing the ontological guilt that permeates our lives.<sup>50</sup>

### 3. REVERSAL VERSUS RECONCILIATION

Reversal and reconciliation are not compatible concepts. On the one hand, Hegel’s dialectical approach attempts to reveal how the oppositions of good and sin are to be reconciled. On the other hand, Nietzsche’s genealogical analysis shows why the reconciliation of good and sin is not possible and why the phenomenon of sin needs to overcome through reversal. The two do not meet.

Hegel contends that everything that comes into existence does so

for a necessary reason, namely, the completion of spirit's rational movement. In the movement of the experience of consciousness, one needs to overcome self-centeredness and reconcile good and evil. Hence, sin is a necessary stage in spirit's development, and the reconciliation of sin occurs through its sublation.

For Nietzsche, life is more a result of accidents than of necessity. Sin is only an accident caused by the way that human drives have discharged themselves. If the drives discharge themselves in different ways, then different phenomena can arise. Hence, what is can become other than it is since what is is not necessary.

As such, the reversal of sin can and should occur for Nietzsche. And the reversal of sin involves initially feeling guilty for our unnaturalness that we have created in the hope of eradicating sin. For Nietzsche, sin is not self-centeredness but self-denial since we deny who we are, that is, we deny that we are natural beings. The point of reversal is to retrieve our naturalness, not to deny it and not to spiritualize it.

A strange point of agreement arises between the two thinkers. Neither Hegel nor Nietzsche sees nature as inherently evil. For Hegel, however, the awareness (thought) of natural existence as being separate from spirit is what gives rise to evil and what needs to be sublated. Thus nature needs to be spiritualized if it is to find its truth. Hegel overcomes natural existence by spiritualizing it.

For Nietzsche, nature, either in itself or in our awareness, was never evil as such. Nature was only made evil through various interpretations of it that deny life. Nature is not something to be sublated but something to be retrieved since we have denied it for too long. Hence, Nietzsche wants to affirm natural existence and attempts to remove it from any spiritual, or transcendent, interpretation.

Both spirit and the man of the future are powerful, and the issue is either one of the power to sublimate or the power to reverse. For Hegel, sin is a problem of the spirit or a spiritual problem, and the power to overcome resides in spirit. For Nietzsche, sin is a "human, all too human" problem, and its overcoming resides in the one to come who is powerful enough to eradicate it through reversal. This type of person is not a sublater.

Given this contrast between the two thinkers, the question arises,

Who resolves the problem of ontological guilt? Even though Hegel does show how sin is overcome in terms of sublation, he maintains the problem. Sin remains present in its sublated form and content. Sublation never means destruction; it means negation and preservation. Hence, the consciousness of sin must maintain itself even when its truth is revealed to consciousness. In this way, Hegel's solution to the problem of sin remains Christian, and even though Christianity is sublated in Hegel, its basic spiritual tenets remain. Thus one never gets rid of ontological guilt since it is and must be there in the recollection of the truth of spirit.

Nietzsche sees that ontological guilt is not necessary and can be overcome to the point of its eradication. Ontological guilt is only a disease in need of a cure, and the cure is reversal. Nietzsche's solution to the problem is Hellenic in its orientation in the sense that it displaces the guilt and does not assume it. Thus Nietzsche is closer than Hegel to resolving the problem of ontological guilt.

## NOTES

1. Not all continental philosophers see guilt as indispensable to existence. For example, Georges Bataille tries to overcome sin, or ontological guilt. Bataille sees the overcoming of sin in terms of excess and sacrifice. His suggestions are provocative and in need of being worked out.

2. The place where moral evil arises is in the section in the *Phenomenology* dealing with the beautiful soul. There are many parallels between the sections on morality and revealed religion, particularly in relation to the self-certainty of the beautiful soul and the need for reconciliation.

Jean Hyppolite interprets moral evil in terms of sin and thereby gives a religious interpretation to moral phenomena. Hyppolite's reading is interesting. However, I believe that the different modes of spirit (the religious and the moral) need to be kept apart, and that Hyppolite jumps the gun by giving moral evil a religious interpretation. Jean Hyppolite, *Genesis and Structure of Hegel's Phenomenology of Spirit*, trans. Samuel Cherniak and John Heckman (Evanston, Ill.: Northwestern University Press, 1974).

3. Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, *Phänomenologie des Geistes* in *Sämtliche Werke*, vol. 2 (Stuttgart-Bad Constatt: Friedrich Frommann, 1964), p. 74; hereafter HSW2. English translation: *The Phenomenology of Spirit* [= ET], trans. A. V. Miller (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977), p. 52.

The reference to death and its incompleteness must be a reference to sin since death is the last evil to be overcome in Christianity. So while death is a natural event, its overcoming is a spiritual event.

4. HSW2, p. 577; ET, p. 459.

5. HSW2, p. 579; ET, p. 461.

6. Tom Rockmore believes that Miller's translation of *Vorstellen* should be rendered as "representation" to fulfil Hegel's intention. However, in this context, the reference to imagery is important. I believe that both the sense of representation and that of imagery have to be grasped in Hegel's use of *Vorstellen* in this instance. Tom Rockmore, *Cognition: An Introduction to Hegel's Phenomenology of Spirit* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997), pp. 5 and 160.

7. HSW2, p. 585; ET, p. 465.

8. HSW2, p. 585; ET, p. 465.

9. HSW2, p. 586; ET, p. 466. The meaning of *Liebe* would have to be divine love, which is love that would have as one of its moments erotic love since reconciliation requires the desire to become reconciled.

10. HSW2, p. 587; ET, p. 467.

11. HSW2, p. 587; ET, p. 467.

12. HSW2, p. 587; ET, p. 467.

13. HSW2, p. 587; ET, p. 467.

14. HSW2, p. 587; ET, p. 467.

15. HSW2, p. 587; ET, p. 467.

16. HSW2, p. 588; ET, p. 468.

17. HSW2, p. 590; ET, p. 470.

18. Hegel says that representational thought has problems comprehending evil "in the divine being *as the wrath of God*" because representational thought "lacks the concept" (ET, pp. 470, 590).

19. Rockmore thinks that Hegel "implicitly contradicts" the idea of original sin when he discusses innocence in terms of the Garden of Eden (Rockmore, *Cognition*, p. 175). However, Hegel recognizes that God can call something good, even if humans cannot recognize good and evil since they do not know it in a state of innocence. I claim that Hegel goes against the doctrine of original sin when he claims that good and evil are not separate from spirit but that both reside within spirit.

20. HSW2, p. 593; ET, p. 472.

21. HSW2, p. 593; ET, p. 472.

22. HSW2, p. 596; ET, p. 475.

23. HSW2, p. 596; ET, p. 476.

24. Friedrich Nietzsche, *Zur Genealogie der Moral*, in *Nietzsche Werke*:



*Kritische Gesamtausgabe*, sec. 6, vol. 2 (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter and Co., 1968), p. 260; hereafter cited as NW6:2. English translation: *On the Genealogy of Morals* trans. Walter Kaufmann and R. J. Hollingdale (New York: Random House, 1967), p. 15; hereafter cited as GM.

25. NW6:2, p. 265; GM, p. 20.

26. NW6:2, p. 337; GM, p. 84.

27. NW6:2, p. 309; GM, p. 59.

28. NW6:2, p. 337; GM, p. 84.

29. NW6:2, p. 340; GM, p. 86.

30. NW6:2, p. 293; GM, p. 45.

31. NW6:2, p. 293; GM, p. 45. Nietzsche says, "To demand of strength that it should *not* express as strength, that it should *not* be a desire to overcome . . . is just as absurd as to demand of weakness that it should express itself as strength" (NW6:2, p. 293; GM, p. 45).

32. NW6:2, p. 293; GM, p. 45.

33. NW6:2, p. 339; GM, p. 85, translation altered.

34. Gilles Deleuze, *Nietzsche and Philosophy*, trans. Hugh Tomlinson (New York: Columbia University Press, 1983), p. 57.

35. NW6:2, p. 318; GM, p. 67.

36. NW6:2, p. 325; GM, p. 73. Nietzsche's genealogical analysis of justice exposes its dialectical character.

37. NW6:2, p. 341; GM, p. 87. In this beginning also lies the origin of the soul that gains more dimensionality the more the active forces are internalized.

38. NW6:2, p. 344; GM, p. 89.

39. NW6:2, p. 343; GM, p. 88.

40. NW6:2, p. 346; GM, p. 91.

41. NW6:2, p. 347; GM, p. 92.

42. NW6:2, p. 347; GM, p. 92.

43. NW6:2, pp. 347–48; GM, p. 92.

44. NW6:2, p. 348; GM, p. 93.

45. NW6:2, p. 351; GM, p. 95.

46. NW6:2, p. 346; GM, p. 91.

47. NW6:2, p. 349; GM, p. 93.

48. NW6:2, p. 351; GM, p. 95; translation altered.

49. NW6:2, p. 351; GM, p. 96.

50. I have translated *Erlösung* as "release" rather than as "redemption." This is the word's proper translation when used with the preposition 'von', and release is more in line with the context of the passage than redemption, which carries too many religious connotations.



# THE GENESIS OF GENESIS

## *The Idea of Development in Hegel's Phenomenology of Spirit and Its Development<sup>1</sup>*

CHRISTOPH ASMUTH

**T**he end of the eighteenth century and the beginning of the nineteenth century saw a dynamization of philosophical theory. The Leibnizian-Wolfian terminology that had degenerated into a school philosophy was to be transformed into genetic concepts. This endeavor is also reflected in the German literature of the time. This is why I would like to begin with a famous quotation from Goethe's *Faust*:

What's written is: "In the beginning was the Word."  
I am stopped already—I cannot play the bard.  
The value of the word I cannot so inflate,  
I must find another way to translate;  
If by spirit's guide my way I find,  
It says, "In the beginning was the Mind."  
Consider well what this line means,

Lest at the start you go to the extreme.  
 Is it mind that makes things take their course?  
 It should read: "In the beginning was the Force."  
 Yet as soon as this is down in writing,  
 Something warns me it is wanting.  
 With spirit's help, I finally solve the need  
 And write: "In the beginning was the *Deed*."<sup>2</sup>

Faust, looking for an answer to all substantial questions of the world, turns to the speculative charter of the revelatory religion, first by translating, second by interpreting. The beginning, the principle, can neither be a mere word nor a mere concept (the meaning as opposed to the merely phonetic sign), for this would lead to a sterile metaphysics in which words follow upon words and sentences follow from sentences. Yet the thing itself would be excluded and all that would remain is a formal logic without substance. Faust could not have found an answer of any existential character in a descriptive metaphysics. 'Force' represents the new natural sciences' potential to provide an answer. But force, too, seems one-sided to Faust. He seems to be satisfied only with the notion of 'deed', which is both practical and dynamic.

This interpretation of the prologue of St. John's Gospel is not, by any means, exclusively to be found in Goethe or in his *Faust*. As early as 1775, Herder interpreted the Johannine 'word' as "the image of God in the human soul, thought! word! will! deed! love!"<sup>3</sup> Here there is also a dynamization. Fichte, for instance, interpreted the word in the *Introduction into the Blessed Life* (1806) as 'Being-there' (*Dasein*), as 'consciousness', which is necessarily 'self-consciousness', as source of all genesis as such, i.e., as *Tathandlung*.<sup>4</sup> It was the French Revolution which, as a radical social change, made clear the revolutionary potential of this dynamization.<sup>5</sup>

It is philosophy's task not only to dip into the stream of events, but also to look over this stream and by reflecting upon it to understand the unfolding events. It was thus inevitable that the notion of development itself would become an object of philosophical thought, and this not only in the sense that *Tathandlung* dominated over fact

and dynamic thought over the dead being. A new topic of philosophical inquiry emerged: how the development of development, the genesis of genesis, is itself possible.

Hegel discusses this topic in the preface of his *Phenomenology of Spirit*, which is why this chapter will focus upon it.<sup>6</sup> The preface is to a certain extent a conclusion of the reflection on the development and of the comprehension of this development in its double meaning of a development of thought and a development of the historical world.

We shall have to keep in mind, of course, that neither the history of thought nor the history of the world ended with Hegel. The dynamic of the historical process has transcended and left behind the universal claim of his philosophy long ago. For centuries the human individual, even the bourgeois citizen who came out of the French Revolution with new self-confidence, has had to bury his dreams of the sovereignty of human reason. He got caught up in the nationalist mass state or the de-individualized industrial world of labor. Therefore we must ask which aspects of a notion of *development* can have a productive bearing upon contemporary discussion.

For this purpose, I shall proceed in the following way:

1. I shall first reconstruct the central problem of Hegel's theory. The following question will be of prime importance: how can the wealth of reality be consistent with reason's claim of absolute unity? The title of the first part is "Wealthy or Poor?"
2. Hegel develops his theory of development particularly in discussion with and by disassociating himself from Schelling. The second part is therefore entitled, "Hegel's Critique of Schelling."
3. It is a characteristic feature of Hegel's thought that he develops the notion of *development* as development of development. Disassociating himself from Spinoza, Fichte, and Schelling, he demonstrates that a theory of development can be consistent only if it takes into account the notion of subjectivity. The third part of my paper is titled, "Subjectivity as Development—Development as Subjectivity."

4. It is not difficult to go beyond Hegel. It seems to be far more difficult to bring his thoughts into play in the contemporary discussion about the mental. Nonetheless, I would like to present some considerations, which may make Hegel's conception adaptable even though they are not meant to be a contribution to the transformation of Hegel's philosophy into a *philosophia perennis*. The notion of *development* particularly, with its dynamizing potential, lays the groundwork for some further reflections on the potential of Roderick Chisholm's analytical position to provide answers. In the final part of this chapter, "The Theory of Subjectivity as a Theory of Development?" I shall limit myself to some pertinent questions.

## I. WEALTHY OR POOR?

Hegel formulates the starting point of any scientific attitude in the beginning of the *Phenomenology* as the starting problem of *his* time. One can certainly suppose, though, that this starting point concerns at least one, if not *the* central, problem of *contemporary* scientific thought. This problem is the result of an insufficiency of scientific method: the spreading and differentiation of actual knowledge goes on interminably. The whole wealth of contents presents itself to the scientific mind. The peculiar and the odd, the esoteric and the exceptional, fascinate the researching mind. At the same time generality is demanded of it: law, the universal rule, the world formula. There is, between these two tendencies, a seemingly unbridgeable polarity. This is for Hegel first of all a contradiction of philosophy itself, i.e., a contradiction within the historical directions of philosophy: "This polarization seems to be the Gordian knot with which scientific culture is at present struggling, and which it still does not properly understand. One side boasts of its wealth of material and intelligibility, the other side at least scorns this intelligibility, and flaunts its immediate rationality and divinity."<sup>7</sup> This has a threefold meaning:

1. The problem lies in the irreconcilability of manifoldness and unity, of the actually known and the immediate principle. The

manifold does not seem to be a pejorative notion for Hegel: 'Wealth' indicates that the wealth of contents, i.e., the different, no longer exclusively negatively relates to the absolute. 'Wealth' also implies the poverty of the merely abstract. Hegel debases abstract unity in comparison to the wealth of contents. He does not one-sidedly decide about the polarity of manifoldness and unity in favor of unity. He does not strive for a metaphysics of unity in which manifoldness is devalued to mere appearance.

2. For this reason, there is a contradiction between two fundamentally different mental approaches to reality: mediating understanding (*vermittelnde Verständlichkeit*) and immediate reason (*unmittelbare Vernünftigkeit*), or the discursive and the reflective approaches.
3. Hegel's analysis implies that his philosophical contemporaries already knew of this problem and tried to solve it. Hegel refers chiefly to Schelling's philosophy, which, as a matter of fact, made the first great post-Kantian attempt to theorize comprehensively about the wealth of actual knowledge under the premise of a philosophy of identity. Schelling's attempt did not suffice, as Hegel demonstrates.

## 2. HEGEL'S CRITIQUE OF SCHELLING

Hegel's polemical critique of Schelling is, to a certain extent, also an appreciation. This may irritate, given the sharpness of the tone. Here, in this prominent passage of the *Phenomenology*, Hegel's critique should not miss its target. Hegel introduces a dictum, which still sticks to Schelling's philosophy like a barnacle. It is a witty statement that has become independent and now lives its own life. It says, to be exact, that Schelling's absolute is like "the night in which all cows are black." Hegel's critique was presumably intended to be strong. He sought to distinguish his philosophy from the philosophical system of his former friend. Nevertheless, his critique cannot hide what Hegel owes to Schelling.

Hegel's diagnosis amounts to the criticism that Schelling subsumed the wealth of the material under a formal and abstract absolute. He tried, in Hegel's words, to subject everything to the "absolute Idea."<sup>8</sup> The absolute is for Schelling, or better, for the Schelling to whom Hegel refers, absolute identity.<sup>9</sup> It immediately signifies an impoverishment that the wealth is subjected to this absolutely identical principle. Hegel sees that in Schelling the manifold is devalued to a mere appearance without any substance in itself in comparison to the absolutely identical One. The wealth of shapes and forms is reduced to the original content of the One—like the night in which all cows are black. This leads to a system of philosophy in which all that is different is contained, but not as *different*: "But a closer inspection shows that this expansion has not come about through one and the same principle having spontaneously assumed different shapes, but rather through the shapeless repetition of one and the same formula, only externally applied to diverse materials, thereby obtaining merely a boring show of diversity."<sup>10</sup>

Hegel both criticizes and follows Schelling. Schelling's system is a shapeless movement. Hegel, though, concedes to Schelling that at least he was on the right track to a solution. The wealth of shapes and the absolute identity of the (divine) principle can be reconciled only if their relation is conceived of not as static, but as dynamic, i.e., as movement. Hegel criticizes Schelling for applying the principle only externally to the diverse and manifold. Thereby the principle is only endlessly repeated. Movement thus becomes repetition. The material is picked up and then questioned about the relation in which it stands to absolute identity in order to put it into the *ordo* of the universe according to this criterion. The notion of 'difference' wins central importance in this critique, since it is based on Hegel's view that Schelling cannot understand the *difference* as *difference*. According to Hegel, here only the appearance of *difference* develops itself. Consequently, we can only lead the one and identical through the inessential difference of the different, which, as such, is nothing but the the One and Absolute.

In the first paragraphs of the *Presentation of My System of Philosophy* (*Darstellung meines Systems der Philosophie*), Schelling shows in fact that Reason is in itself, and externally, One, and that all that is, is



in it as one and the same. The text of §11 is phrased in a way which is reminiscent of Spinoza: "All that is, is the absolute identity itself." As clarification Schelling adds: "Everything that is, is as such One. . . . Only the absolute identity is as such, therefore everything is only insofar as it is the absolute identity itself, but insofar as it is not the absolute identity, it is not at all as such."<sup>11</sup> Difference is thus unsuitable for *being*; it is always being-less difference, insignificant difference. Everything that is different is thus insignificantly different, and what is significant is exclusively the identity that, in Hegel's words, is only "boringly repeated" as the different.

This happens, as Hegel explains in another passage of the *Vorrede*, through a certain methodological formalism:

This formalism . . . imagines that it has comprehended and expressed the nature and life of a form when it has endowed it with some determination of the schema as a predicate. The predicate may be subjectivity or objectivity, or, say, magnetism, electricity, etc., contraction or expansion, east or west, and life. Such predicates can be multiplied to infinity, since in this way each determination or form can again be used as a form or moment in the case of an other, and each can gratefully perform the same service for an other. In this sort of circle of reciprocity one never learns what the thing itself is, nor what the one or the other is.<sup>12</sup>

Hegel exemplifies his critique of Schelling through a polemical analysis of his method. This critique mentions the following in detail:

1. The arbitrariness of the predication. Definitions are arbitrarily assigned to their respective subjects of predication.
2. The circularity of the predication. Definitions are reciprocally said of one another.
3. The predication does not add anything to the knowledge of the thing. One does not find out anything about the thing, for it is covered by the definitions. The thing is not understood in its self-motion but obscured by alien definitions added externally.

Schelling's method can finally succeed only if the formalized material was previously known. Nature, its shapes and forms, partic-

ularly the strange and odd, must already be known if we are to apply the form, the rule, or the law to it. Because of this, the apriorism of Schelling's system proves its opposite in Hegel's eyes; only subsequently does identity accrue to the matter:

The Idea, which is of course true enough on its own account, remains in effect always in its primitive condition if its development involves nothing more than this sort of repetition of the same formula. When the knowing subject goes around applying this single inert form to whatever it encounters, and dipping the material into this placid element from outside, this is no more the fulfillment of what is needed, i.e., a self-originating, self-differentiating wealth of shapes, than any arbitrary insights into the contents.<sup>13</sup>

### 3. SUBJECTIVITY AS DEVELOPMENT— DEVELOPMENT AS SUBJECTIVITY

Hegel's theory puts motion not into the form but into the content itself. The form is not to be brought to the content from outside, but the content itself ought to *develop* into its manifold contents. Schematic movement, which always only repeats the same as the nonessentially different, is to be replaced with an active development whose material diversity is defined immanently. This means that difference and being-different are immanent and thus receive a *necessary* character. The wealth of forms is possible only if the difference becomes necessary and if, at the same time, unity gets transformed into developed unity, i.e., an enriched and wealthy unity. The static juxtaposition of unity and difference can represent no permanent and therefore no meaningful relation. It becomes meaningful only through the notion of movement. Because of this, *negation* becomes the center of Hegel's considerations.

Negation means first of all a limit, a boundary, or a lacking. The negative is the negative of the positive, and therefore not somehow different, but a definitely opposing contradictory part of the relation. This implies a factor of identity: "In Opposition, determinate Reflection, or Difference, is perfected. It is the unity of Identity and

Variety; its moments are various in one Identity, and thus are *opposite*.”<sup>14</sup> The look at this oneness—here formally shortened—opens up the perspective of negativity. Negativity is the germ cell of subjectivity. For it implies movement, which can only be produced by negativity and which only comes back to itself through the *negation of negation*. “When we further speak of negativity or negative nature,” as Hegel puts it in the 1812 *Science of Logic*, “we do not mean the first negation, the boundary, limit, lack, but essentially the negation of otherness which is as such *self-relating*.”<sup>15</sup> Negativity—in contrast to negation—focuses upon the whole, which is not only negation or the negation of negation but the whole of this movement, *relation to itself*. Negation is deprived of its destructive character by this look at the whole and by its being a process. Even in Fichte and in Schelling, there are considerations where it is precisely negation that is to be blamed for the destructive factor. In Fichte, it is particularly the task of thinking to think negationless unity, for which not even the possibility of plurality exists.<sup>16</sup> Conversely, in Hegel, negation guarantees the wealth of appearances and makes a self-enriching and developing unity possible *qua* negation of negation.

Furthermore, Hegel is aware of the genesis of his insight. It does not simply come to light. The idea of a developing movement itself has a development of which Hegel is eminently conscious. In formulating the goal of his system, Hegel knew he was in agreement with Fichte and Schelling. Everything, as Hegel puts it, “turns on grasping and expressing the True, not only as *Substance*, but equally as *Subject*.”<sup>17</sup>

Hegel’s development of the problem starts with Spinoza, who conceived God as substance. This is an attempt at unifying subject and substance. But this standpoint is, according to Hegel, characterized by the shortcoming that self-consciousness does not retain any function for the system; it has merely vanished. It has been abolished without parts of it being preserved. Hegel thus interprets Spinoza in the traditional way of his time that assigned a one-sided, realistic point of view to Spinoza, but already in the context of a theory of subject-objectivity.<sup>18</sup>

The opposing conception cannot claim an advantage in comparison to Spinoza’s conception. If one holds to “thought as thought,”

this is nothing more but generality as such, a mere simplicity, an undifferentiated, unmoved substantiality.<sup>19</sup> Against the background of the question about a philosophically radically understood subjectivity, it becomes clear that with this notion one cannot express more than the substance of Spinoza: Spinoza posits extension and thought, the real and the ideal as infinite attributes of the one substance, and as undifferentiated within the substance. The opposition to Spinoza's system emphasizes, first of all, the unity of thought. But it results in the same static connection between substance and subject. By directing itself wholly toward itself, by understanding itself in its unity, it can no longer reach the manifold contents. The wealth of appearances remains external.

Hegel speaks finally of intellectual intuition. It is the immediate unity of thought and intuition and therefore the immediate unity of substance and subject. With this, Hegel obviously targets not only Schelling but also Fichte, who himself occasionally understood *Thathandlung* as intellectual intuition. In both cases, Hegel diagnoses a conception which has as its goal the unity of substance and subject. This is in fact the goal of all consistent philosophical systems. But today, Hegel adds, "the question is still whether this intellectual intuition does not again fall back into inert simplicity, and does not depict actuality itself in a nonactual manner."<sup>20</sup>

Looking at the consequences of the system outlined, Hegel criticizes the *unreal reality* apart from the *idle simplicity*. This means:

1. Mere unity as the principle of a system cannot at all explain anything genetically. From it follows the empty repetition of the absolute One as the unessential differentiated, for it is mere unity as principle. This is why this unity is idle. It is unmovable and does not develop itself.
2. Thereby reality becomes unreal. This principle dominates the understanding of reality. Simplicity is the essential; the different is merely its appearance. But what is in infinitely manifold ways different is precisely the real reality, which is devalued to an unreal reality by the emphasis on simplicity. The wealth of appearances becomes an unreal wealth.

According to Hegel, all these standpoints have the shortcoming that they do not understand subjectivity as active: "Further, the living Substance is being which is in truth *Subject*, or, what is the same, is in truth actual only insofar as it is the movement of positing itself, or is the mediation of its self-othering with itself."<sup>21</sup> Here, the different strands of Hegel's argumentation are brought together. The idea of liveliness, which will begin to play a dominant role only in the chapter on Self-Consciousness, implies both the idea of a developing movement and the idea of subjectivity. If *idle simplicity* becomes invested with the liveliness of subjectivity, it becomes developing unity. It is statically exemplified no longer in view of the inessential different, but is itself living difference. It becomes *different from itself*, as Hegel says, in order to unite itself again with itself. A unity that is not idle is the "self-restoring sameness."<sup>22</sup> Hegel thus answers the question of how the concrete wealth of appearances could consistently be reconciled with the universality of thinking in the following way: "This Substance is, as Subject, pure, *simple negativity*, and is for this very reason the bifurcation of the simple; it is the doubling which sets up opposition, and then again the negation of this indifferent diversity and of its anti-thesis [the immediate simplicity]."<sup>23</sup>

#### 4. THE THEORY OF SUBJECTIVITY AS A THEORY OF DEVELOPMENT?

From a systematic point of view, Hegel's theory of subjectivity may have ceased to be of any great importance. It seems that it can no longer contribute to the explanation of *our* world. One does not need to be convinced of the *death of the subject* to reject a philosophical program that insists upon universal validity. Nonetheless, one could argue that one thus throws the baby out with the bathwater. There are certainly reasons for not developing a theory of subjectivity along the old lines. But it needs to be asked if these reasons can justify the refusal to study Hegel's approach. Furthermore, it needs to be asked whether these reasons are also *good* reasons.

Any theory of subjectivity is burdened by the terminology of sub-

jectivity. This makes the discussion about its importance and philosophical relevance enormously difficult. There are many concepts and notions that define the surroundings of theories of subjectivity. It is a waft of mist, an obscure mixture of suspicions, definitions, and traditions. This is why I shall claim for myself the philosopher's right to define notions according to one's own purpose. But I would like to emphasize that my definitions are supported by some traditions. For this reason I offer the following brief explanations.

*Subject* is either a logical or a transcendental philosophical notion. In the latter sense, it stands for the sum of all those functions and features that are attributed to the cognizing subject. They provide an answer to the question about the conditions of the possibility of knowledge. Therefore the 'subject' is not a thing; a theory of subjectivity is not an ontology. The 'subject' does not form the basis; it is not the substance to which the accidents belong as features. The 'subject' does not have a plural; it is meaningless to speak of 'subjects'. One cannot speak of the existence or nonexistence of 'subjects' as one can with regard to things.

*Self-Consciousness* is consciousness which reflects upon itself, i.e., a consciousness of consciousness. An ultimate rational justification of 'self-consciousness' is problematic because it involves a logical circle. It is still to be examined whether infinite regress is not only possible, but also the only possible way of an ultimate rational justification.

The *I* is the unity of self-consciousness and therefore the unity of a duality. The 'I' is the unity of the thinking I and of the I which is thought of; the I is thus always I in its unity. The I is both empirical, an individual I, the I of a person, and the 'I *in general*'. There is therefore a difference between 'I' and self-consciousness, because the I implies the idea of unity. There is also a difference between the I and the subject, because, in contrast to the subject, to speak of the I immediately implies my I, even though not my individual I, but the *I in general*.

The *individual* is the single person as a single person. Therefore, 'individual' is the counternotion to 'subject', which is in all acts of cognition—as condition for the possibility of knowledge—identical. Conversely, the individual is distinct from any other individual. For

the individual, each other individual is different from it and thus an other to which the individual refers itself as an other.

The *person* is the individual in the moral and political context. It has certain rights and an inviolable dignity. States, nations, cities, societies, and families consist of persons. It is not very meaningful to speak of "intersubjectivity" because this notion presupposes that there *are* several subjects. But it is meaningful to speak of 'interpersonality'. The subject does not have any character, but the individual person does. A person can undergo psychoanalysis. The individual I, his character, his history, and his emotions are inseparably tied to his being a person. *I am a person.*

In Roderick Chisholm's famous book, *The First Person: Theory of Reference and Intentionality*, the sentences of the first person are integrated into an ontology which has been called a "Platonic realism of universals."<sup>24</sup> This designation is certainly historically problematic but may be accepted for the time being. Chisholm shows that the characteristics a person ascribes to him- or herself cannot be transformed into third-person attributes. This is why direct and indirect attributions are different. Any reference to an object can be understood as an attribution that is mediated by the first person. The first person is the unique and eminent position of the speaker, which has a certain constitutive function for our meaningful predications.

According to Chisholm, ontology deals with what exists, and, he emphatically stresses, what exists in a philosophically strict sense.<sup>25</sup> Chisholm's theory starts from the assumption of "individual things" and of "*eternal*, or *abstract* objects," such as features, relations, and facts, which also exist in a philosophically strict sense.

Finally, the I belongs to what exists. Chisholm explains self-consciousness on this basis: "One realizes that there is a single thing that has all one's self-presenting properties and that *that* is the thing which one makes all one's direct attributions."<sup>26</sup> Chisholm combines Descartes and Kant. According to Kant, it is not possible to speak of the transcendental apperception as a 'thing'. But Chisholm understands the 'I think' as 'cogito' in the sense of Descartes's 'res cogitans'. Thereby the historical links come to light, but this does not solve the problem of a philosophical theory of the I. This theory pre-

supposes an actual language and coagulates in the solidification of thingliness. The subject is not a thing, as has been shown, and cannot be part of any ontology. Each ontology of the subject is an obstacle to a dynamic theory of speaking and thinking. The critique of the reduction of speaking to propositional speaking and the emphasis on the exclusive standpoint of the first person are features of Chisholm's approach which are unconditionally to be shared. Chisholm can avoid the circularity of which classical theories of subjectivity have been accused. The subject cannot think *itself*, but it can only think something *of himself*. The self can be object of its attributions, but it is not a part of the content of this attribution. The thinking of thinking—a central place of philosophical endeavor since Aristotle—seems to be the blind spot of epistemology.

A conception of mental features or exclusive 'I-things' to which these features are attributed, however, must not replace what is criticized. This is precisely the case of Chisholm's unmovable unity, which is brought to the plurality of contents without developing itself. In Chisholm, the unity of consciousness is furthermore nothing but a container in which perceptions and ideas, relations and attributions lie next to one another, in no way different from a wooden horse.<sup>27</sup> The 'I-thing' is simply not of merely formal nature. It is not merely empty; it has a characteristic synthetic function. It also needs to be examined whether the attributes that Chisholm conceives as abstract entities with an ontological status belong to those contents of which one can only assure oneself by thinking. But to refer to something that *exists* in a philosophically strict sense means to transform dynamic thought acts into things. The comment, finally, that Hegel assigns the ability to formulate propositions with a characteristic content to pure knowledge, i.e., speculative propositions, should not be suppressed.<sup>28</sup>

The dynamic conception of Hegel proves to be something worth thinking about. To tie negation as the driving force of motion to the self-moving subject is epistemologically more elegant than Chisholm's model, which is based upon philosophy of language and epistemology and retains its static attributions and self-attributions. Thus linked to the processive character of subjectivity, the philosophy



of language can be dynamized in a way that moves beyond Hegel. If the ring holding together Hegel's conception like an iron chain is blown up, the system and the system idea are transformed into an open structure. Dialectic turns into dialogue. The negation, previously bound to the system, is now directed toward the partner in the conversation, even toward one's own I as partner. The motion which Hegel conceived of only as development, as development toward the ultimate reconciliation, now turns into a searching groping, into a despairing wandering astray, to the "Bacchanalian revel in which no member is not drunk," a revel which is dispersed into what cannot be logically anticipated and into infinite particularity and plurality.<sup>29</sup> Yet concealed in this conception of subjectivity is the possibility for the particular individual person to think transindividual thoughts—not as general thoughts but thoughts of equivalent universality.

## NOTES

1. I would like to thank Holger Zaborowski for the translation of this essay and Dr. Ian Kaplow for his helpful suggestions.

2. Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, *Faust*, Erster Teil, 1224–37; *Faust und Urfaust*, ed. Ernst Beutler (Leipzig: Dietrich'sche Verlagsbuchhandlung, 1940), pp. 47–48. Translated by Michael G. Vater. For the problem of beginning, see Christoph Asmuth, "Hegel und der Anfang der Wissenschaft," in Christoph Asmuth et al. (Hg.), *Die Grenzen der Sprache: Sprachimmanenz—Sprachtranszendenz* (Amsterdam: Benjamin's, 1998); Annette Sell, *Martin Heideggers Gang durch Hegels Phänomenologie des Geistes*, Hegel-Studien. Beiheft 39 (Bonn: Bouvier 1998).

3. "Das Bild Gottes in der menschlichen Seele, Gedanke! Wort! Wille! Tat! Liebe!" in *Herders sämtliche Werke*, vol. 7, ed. Jakob Balde, Bernhard Suphan, et al. (Berlin: Weidmann, 1877–1913), pp. 355–56.

4. In the later Fichte, "genesis" is the translation of *Thathandlung*; see *Wissenschaftslehre 1804, II* in *J. G. Fichte: Gesamtausgabe der Bayerischen Akademie der Wissenschaften*, vol. 8, ed. Reinhard Lauth et al. (Stuttgart-Bad Cannstatt: Frommann-Holzboog, 1962), sec. 2, p. 202; cited hereafter as GA II, 8.

5. See Jean Hyppolite, "La Signification de la Révolution Française dans la 'Phénoménologie' de Hegel," in *Revue philosophique de la France et*

*de l'étranger*, 128 (1939): 321–52; K. Nusser, “Die Französische Revolution und Hegels Phänomenologie des Geistes,” in *Philosophisches Jahrbuch*, 77 (1970): 276–96.

6. For the preface, see G. Trog, *Lezioni sulla prefazione della 'Fenomenologia dello spirito' di Hegel* (Milan: La goliardica, 1970); Jean Hyppolite, “Essai d'interprétation de la préface de la Phénoménologie,” in *Figures de la pensée philosophique: Écrites 1931–1968*, vol. 1 (Paris: PUF, 1971), pp. 275–308; Werner Marx, *Hegels Phänomenologie des Geistes: Die Bestimmung ihrer Idee in 'Vorrede' und 'Einleitung'* (Frankfurt am Main: Klostermann, 1971); R. Schacht, “Commentary on the Preface to Hegel's ‘Phenomenology of Spirit,’” in *Philosophical Studies* 23 (1972): 1–31.

7. Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, *Phänomenologie des Geistes*, trans. W. Bonsiepen and R. Heede, in *Gesammelte Werke*, Bd. 9 (Hamburg: Meiner, 1980), p. 16; hereafter cited as GW9. English translation: *Phenomenology of Spirit*, trans. A. V. Miller (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1977), p. 8; hereafter cited as ET.

8. GW9, p. 16; ET, p. 8.

9. See, for example, the *Darstellung meines Systems der Philosophie* (1801) in F. W. J. Schelling, *Sämtliche Werke*, vol. 4, ed. K. F. A. Schelling (Stuttgart and Augsburg: Cotta, 1859); hereafter cited as SW4.

10. GW9, pp. 16–17; ET, p. 8.

11. Schelling, *Darstellung*, p. 119 (“Alles, was ist, ist an sich Eines. . . . Die absolute Identität ist das Einzige, was schlechthin, oder an sich ist, also ist alles nur insofern an sich, als es die absolute Identität selbst ist, und insofern es nicht die absolute Identität ist, ist es überhaupt nicht an sich”).

12. GW9, p. 36; ET, p. 29.

13. GW9, p. 17; ET, pp. 8–9.

14. Georg Friedrich Wilhelm Hegel, *Wissenschaft der Logik. Zweites Buch: Die Lehre vom Wesen*, in *Gesammelte Werke*, vol. 11, ed. Rheinisch-Westfälischen Akademie der Wissenschaften (Hamburg: Meiner, 1968–), p. 272; see also Klaus J. Schmidt, *G. W. F. Hegel: Wissenschaft der Logik—Die Lehre vom Wesen: Ein einführender Kommentar* (Paderborn and Zürich: Schöningh 1997), p. 69.

15. Hegel, *Wissenschaft der Logik*, vol. 11, p. 77 (“Wenn fernerhin von Negativität oder negativer Natur die Rede seyn wird, so ist darunter nicht jene erste Negation, die Grenze, Schranke oder Mangel, sondern wesentlich die Negation des Andersseyns zu verstehen, die, als solche, Beziehung auf sich selbst ist.”)

16. Fichte, GAI, 8, pp. 69–70.

17. GW9, p. 18; ET, p. 10.

18. Influenced by Jacobi, Fichte and Schelling interpreted Spinoza as a model for their own philosophizing, both with respect to its method and to its systematic character, but they have also distanced themselves from Spinoza because his system seemed to them too objective and too realistic in a one-sided way.

19. The editors think that Hegel's formulation 'thought as thought' refers plausibly to Bardili and Reinhold (GW9, p. 486).

20. GW9, p. 18; ET, p. 10.

21. GW9, p. 18; ET, p. 10.

22. GW9, p. 18; ET, p. 10.

23. GW9, p. 18; ET, p. 10.

24. Heinz-Dieter Heckmann and Roderick M. Chisholm, "Einleitung," in Manfred Frank, ed., *Analytische Theorien des Selbstbewusstseins* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1994), p. 260.

25. Roderick M. Chisholm, *The First Person: An Essay on Reference and Intentionality*, Lectures 13 (Brighton, Sussex: Royal Institute of Philosophy, 1981), p. 4.

26. Chisholm, *The First Person*, p. 90. For a contrary view, see Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Tractatus logico-philosophicus*, trans. D. F. Pears and B. F. McGuinness (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1961), p. 117: "There is no such thing as the subject that thinks or entertains ideas. . . . The subject does not belong to the world: rather it is a limit of the world" (5.631 f.).

27. Plato, *Theaetetus*, 184c-d; Chisholm, *First Person*, pp. 75-91.

28. For Hegel's theory of language, see Josef Simon, *Das Problem der Sprache bei Hegel* (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 1966); Josef Simon, "Die Kategorien in 'gewöhnlichen' und in 'spekulativen' Satz: Bemerkungen zur Hegels Wissenschaftsbegriff," in *Wiener Jahrbuch für Philosophie* 3 (1970): 9-37; Jean Hyppolite, "Structure du langage philosophique d'après la préface de la Phénoménologie de l'esprit," in *Figures*, pp. 340-52; Theodor Bodhammer, *Hegels Deutung der Sprache. Interpretationen zu Hegels Äußerungen über die Sprache* (Hamburg, Meiner, 1969); D. J. Cook, *Language in the Philosophy of Hegel* (The Hague: Mouton, 1973); J. P. Surber, "Language, Time, and System: An Examination of Hegel's Conception of Language" (Ph.D. diss., University of Pennsylvania, 1974); Christoph Asmuth, "Hegel und der Anfang," *Die Grenzen der Sprache*, pp. 193-200.

29. GW9, p. 35; ET, p. 27.



# 13 HEGEL ON SPIRIT AND EPISTEMOLOGY

TOM ROCKMORE

Hegel, who criticizes Kant's a priori theory of knowledge, justifies a posteriori claims to know through a concept of spirit. Hegel's view does not arise in a conceptual vacuum but against the background of the discussion of his time. Accordingly, the aim of this chapter is to reconstruct Hegel's theory of knowledge in its historical context and to show how spirit functions within it. If I am correct that spirit is central to Hegel's theories, then it would be an error to regard it as confined to a single writing. A fuller discussion than can be undertaken here would discuss it within the wider framework of Hegel's corpus. Such a discussion would be fruitful since spirit is a basic element in the theories Hegel advances in his four books, the four pillars of his system. To take a single example, it is obvious that spirit is a central element of the theory of social reconciliation in the modern state that Hegel proposes in the *Philosophy of Right*.<sup>1</sup> My focus here will be on spirit in the *Phenomenology*, Hegel's first and perhaps greatest work.

## I. SPIRIT IN THE HEGEL LITERATURE

Hegel's view of spirit and its role in his position are not well understood. It is often mentioned, but has been little studied, at least studied directly.<sup>2</sup> As concerns spirit, there seem to be three main attitudes. Call them the religious attitude, the historical attitude, and the attitude of benign neglect. The religious attitude stresses the relation of spirit to Christianity, which is appropriate in virtue of the origin of the Hegelian concept. It is prominent in right-wing readings of Hegel which assimilate Hegel's theories to a disguised theology.<sup>3</sup> A more historical, secular approach stresses the identification and discussion of references to forms of spirit, particularly in the Greek city-state, most recently in H. S. Harris's enormous study of the *Phenomenology*.<sup>4</sup> From this perspective, the chapter on Spirit, which is replete with nostalgia for ancient Greece, appears as an extreme example of the Grecophilia that arose in German philosophy after Winckelmann. Then there is the widespread benign neglect of spirit by many who write on Hegel, even on the *Phenomenology*, without addressing the concept of spirit directly.<sup>5</sup>

## 2. SOME INFLUENCES ON HEGEL'S VIEW OF SPIRIT

Hegel's idea of spirit draws on both religious and secular sources. The obvious religious source is the well-known but scarcely developed Christian doctrine of the Holy Spirit, roughly reconciliation through the immanence of divine spirit in the human community. Spirit is an old, but never fully clarified idea, probably best known in the Christian doctrine of the Trinity, according to which the Holy Spirit is God under the form of the third person.<sup>6</sup> The doctrine of the Trinity is relatively recent. At the Council of Nicea in 325 C.E., nothing more than belief in the Holy Spirit was affirmed. Trinitarian doctrine was elaborated only in the last quarter of the fourth century.<sup>7</sup> Earlier, Tertullian and Aphraates used spirit as a synonym for Christ. According to Origen, who worked out a parallel between the

doctrine of the Holy Spirit and the doctrine of Logos,<sup>8</sup> the Holy Spirit belongs to the Godhead but, as a creature, occupies a lower stage than the Son. Differences in approach to spirit are inevitable since the textual basis in scripture is extremely weak. For Gregory of Nazianus, writing in 380, about the time that the trinitarian doctrine was emerging, "to be only slightly in error [about the Holy Spirit] was to be orthodox."<sup>9</sup> According to Alan Olson, the relative lack of theological reflection about spirit is due to the rapid development of theological monarchism that led instead to ecclesiology. He regards the Christian doctrine of spirit as a mere potpourri.<sup>10</sup>

Many secular thinkers have taken part in the effort over centuries to rethink the Christian view of holy spirit (that is intended, within a religious framework, to mediate the relation between human being and God) as a mediating factor between individuals within a social setting. Rousseau's famous political conception of the general will (*volonté générale*) implies the spirit of a people, an idea which becomes explicit in Montesquieu's idea of the *génie d'une nation*, or the *esprit général*. In *The Spirit of Laws*, Montesquieu argues for a general spirit influenced by climate, religion, laws, and government.<sup>11</sup> Herder, Kant's former student, maintains that through the study of a people's language, we understand the people.<sup>12</sup> In his later period, Fichte contends that a people, such as the Germans, has an intrinsic spirit that animates the nation and is manifest in language.<sup>13</sup> The unclarified status of the Christian conception of spirit and the diffuse way it appears in modern philosophy made it easy for Hegel to adapt it for his own philosophical purposes. Hegel sees the Lutheran insight into free spirit as leading to the Cartesian idea of free thought, thereby imparting a specifically epistemological twist to an originally religious conception. Obvious secular influences on Hegel's view include Rousseau, Montesquieu, Herder, and Fichte.

Spirit is a main theme in Hegel's writings as early as his first major study, unpublished during his lifetime: "The Spirit of Christianity and Its Fate."<sup>14</sup> He consistently understands spirit from a Lutheran perspective. As late as his last period in Berlin, he insists that Luther's teachings are recognized by philosophy, meaning his philosophy, as true.<sup>15</sup> He describes the Lutheran view of the relation between God,

subjective will, and being as the richest but not yet fully developed view.<sup>16</sup> Yet Hegel's own conception of spirit, which is religious in origin, functions in a secular epistemological fashion, in the wake of his critique of Kant's a priori approach to knowledge, to justify a posteriori claims to know.

### 3. A PRELIMINARY VIEW OF SPIRIT IN THE *PHENOMENOLOGY*

The difficulty in comprehending Hegel's conception of spirit is due as much to its over-determined nature as to difficulties in expounding an idea at the epicenter of his theory that, for this reason, cannot be explained through anything else. At the very least, his conception is determined by his concern with epistemology after Kant, by his need to provide a positive model of subjectivity, by prior philosophical discussion of spirit, by his religious background, and by his concern to respond to such thinkers as Descartes, Kant, and Fichte. It is not simple to expound a concept that lies at the conceptual confluence of so many aspects of Hegel's complex theory.

It will be useful to start with a linguistic point, which is relevant for those who must read Hegel in English. In discussing spirit, I will be discussing the term *Geist*, which is sometimes also translated as mind. This seems to me to be a questionable translation, since for an English speaker it suggests links to philosophy of mind, which is precisely opposed to what Hegel represents.<sup>17</sup> There is not only little attention as to how this concept functions in Hegel's theories but also little agreement as to what Hegel means by 'spirit'. Some references to the secondary literature may be helpful here. I believe that Harris is correct in writing that "Spirit is the self-consciousness of a community; and rational individuality has now been shown to be the self-consciousness of a community."<sup>18</sup> Terry Pinkard usefully relates this view to contemporary views of social constructionism in writing: "If not the *Phenomenology of Spirit* itself, something like the *Phenomenology of Spirit* becomes possible in a community in which people have come to understand themselves as cultural artifacts, as constituted by



their practices, as finding their forms of legitimization, of reassurance and affirmation coming only from the historical nature of norm-guided reflective activity trying to make norms intelligible to itself.”<sup>19</sup>

In part, spirit belongs to Hegel’s view of subjectivity. Later modern views of knowledge develop out of the reaction to Descartes. Yet prior to Hegel, there was no plausible idea of the cognitive subject that was instead depicted in a series of fictitious epistemological posits as the Cartesian ‘cogito’, the Lockean ‘tabula rasa’, the Humean bundle of perceptions, the Kantian transcendental unity of apperception, and so on. In the concept of spirit Hegel advances a conception of human knowledge whose subject is real people who live, meet their needs, become aware of themselves, and arrive at a mutable collection of views which at any given moment describe their overall conceptions of who they are and what they stand for within an evolving social context.

## 4. THE PROBLEM OF KNOWLEDGE AFTER KANT

It is sometimes thought that epistemology comes to an end with Kant.<sup>20</sup> If this were the case, then there would be no epistemological link between Kant and post-Kantian philosophy. Since Hegel’s discussion of spirit arises in the context of his theory of knowledge, it will be useful to mention the state of the debate to which Hegel reacted. With the prominent exception of Heidegger, there is general agreement that Kant’s critical philosophy centers on the problem of knowledge. Kant’s approach to knowledge turns on what is often called his Copernican revolution in philosophy. Kant’s Copernican revolution is based on his effort to apply an insight he attributes to Copernicus, which, he claims, made possible the rise of the new science, to the problem of knowledge in general. In a famous footnote in the second introduction to the *Critique of Pure Reason*, Kant points out that the Copernican astronomical revolution follows from the insight that, to use modern language, the apparent retrograde motion of the heavenly bodies, or planets, could best be explained

through the motion of the subject.<sup>21</sup> According to Kant, all of modern science follows from this insight. He specifically claims that in formulating his theory of gravitation, Newton proved the Copernican hypothesis. In the critical philosophy, Kant applies the Copernican approach to astronomy to the problem of knowledge in general through a constructivist approach. According to Kant, Galileo, Torricelli, and Stahl taught students of nature, among which he includes himself, that we can know only what we in some sense produce.<sup>22</sup> The aim of the critical philosophy is to show that and how we produce what we know as a condition of knowledge.

Kant claims that a theory of knowledge must be a systematic science. With the exception of Maimon, a skeptic who thought that Kant's theories could not be improved, and Hamann and Herder, who thought that the theories were incorrect, Kant's main successors thought he was in general correct but that his position remained to be developed. Later German idealism constitutes an ongoing effort, conducted by a great many talented thinkers, to extend and to complete Kant's critical philosophy in the form of a scientific, or systematic, theory of knowledge, necessary not according to its letter but rather according to its spirit.

## 5. HEGEL AND KANT'S COPERNICAN TURN

Hegel's critique of his predecessors, which is directed *inter alia* against empiricism, rationalism, and Kant's critical philosophy, presupposes the validity of a revised form of Kant's Copernican turn. In the *Phenomenology* and in the *History of Philosophy*, Hegel rejects Cartesian rationalism on the grounds that certainty is not sufficient for truth. Although he continues to defend a kind of empiricism, he rejects empiricism in its traditional British and Kantian varieties.<sup>23</sup> Hegel's analysis of sense-certainty shows that, even were there an immediate given, which Hegel disputes, it would at best be the poorest, not the richest, hence in no way an adequate form of knowledge. The critique of the Kantian conception of cognition, in the

introduction, as resting on an implicit but indemonstrable distinction between the given and the instrument or the medium, undermines the Kantian transcendental approach to empirical knowledge. Although he rejects the letter of Kant's critical philosophy, Hegel participates in the post-Kantian effort, beginning with Fichte, Kant's self-proclaimed orthodox disciple, to elaborate its spirit by thinking with Kant against Kant. Hegel's effort to rethink Kant's critical philosophy results in a very different type of theory. The most important difference lies in Hegel's concern, which later attracted Dilthey, to rethink Kant's Copernican but a priori, ahistorical, constructivist analysis of the conditions of the possibility of experience and knowledge whatsoever in the form of an a posteriori, constructivist historical process.

Kant's critical philosophy rests on the distinction between knowledge and its general conditions. Hegel rejects the distinction between the conditions of knowledge and knowledge itself but accepts the constructivist insight that we know only what we in some sense produce. Kant obscurely contends that we produce our object through a kind of activity which, since it is lodged in the depths of the soul, cannot be known.<sup>24</sup> In response, Hegel offers an account of the real development of our views of knowledge. His theories constitute a gigantic constructivist effort, deviating from Kant's transcendental-logical constructivism by linking the process of knowledge to finite human beings situated within human history.

## **6. SPIRIT AND EPISTEMOLOGY IN THE *PHENOMENOLOGY***

In continuing and developing Kant's theory of knowledge, Hegel turns it inside out, transforming an ahistorical conception into a thoroughly historical theory. While he disagrees with almost every specific Kantian doctrine, he is also Kant's most profound student, the greatest of the Kantians, Kant's successor who more than anyone else elaborates in historical form the ahistorical Copernican insight which is the conceptual basis of the critical philosophy.

Hegel develops his reformulation and extension of the critical phi-

losophy to begin with in the *Phenomenology*, where Kant is everywhere woven into the warp and woof of the discussion. Kant uses the Latin *cognitio* and the German *Erkenntnis* to designate knowledge. Hegel uses *Erkennen*, which is obviously related to *anerkennen* as well as *kennen*, and is further related to *Erkenntnistheorie* and *Erkenntnislehre*, as a general term which embraces specific types of knowledge. It is not a mere accident that he uses the same word as Kant since his aim is precisely to succeed where he believes Kant has failed in the same task. Hegel's *Phenomenology* offers a connected series of arguments in the form of a single theory about cognition (*Erkennen*).<sup>25</sup> The main theme of the *Phenomenology* is a discussion of epistemology after Kant, running from sense certainty to absolute knowing.

Kant's critical theory can be interpreted in two main ways. On the one hand, it can be read, as his view of the thing in itself suggests, as foreclosing knowledge of independent reality. In that case it leads, as Maimon and Hegel thought, to skepticism. On the other hand, it can be read as holding that appearances are the appearances of something which appears.<sup>26</sup> To be sure, Kant does not claim that we know the thing in itself, or independent reality, which he cannot claim without violating his limitation of knowledge to experience. Yet his focus on the relation of appearances to objects, as suggested in the famous letter to Herz, means that it must be possible to know that and how appearances relate to what appears.<sup>27</sup> Yet if we cannot know that we know an independent object, then Kant's effort to know that and how appearances relate to reality, or the second reading of the critical philosophy, fails. Hegel's solution lies in abandoning the idea that to know is to know an independent object in favor of the weaker, clearly more defensible claim that to know is to know what is given in the experience of consciousness.

Kant is concerned with consciousness as the relation of appearances to objects. Hegel's theory requires accounts of consciousness and self-consciousness, respectively consciousness of what is known and consciousness of consciousness of what is known. His theory culminates in a concept of absolute knowing which has been often ridiculed and certainly much misunderstood. Hegel is partly to blame for the very enigmatic chapter on Absolute Knowing, which is diffi-

cult to interpret. Since he needed to complete the book in timely fashion to protect the financial guarantee of his friend Niethammer, he wrote this chapter rather quickly. The concept is further difficult to interpret for another reason concerning the link between the term 'absolute' and the religious interpretation of Hegel. In Hegel, for whom all claims to know are in principle revisable, 'absolute' does not mean unrevisable, say, in the sense that, for Descartes, claims to know are apodictic. For Hegel, following Kant, the term 'absolute' rather means valid without limit.<sup>28</sup> Kant, who was concerned to counter Hume's bundle theory of the subject, describes knowledge from the perspective of the original synthetic unity of apperception, or a logical subject, as distinguished from a human being. Hegel refuses the idea of an abstract subject in favor of finite human beings. He holds that knowledge requires consciousness of what is known as well as self-consciousness. This is not a simple given, as Descartes and Kant think, but a historical product whose conditions Hegel traces in the famous analysis of the relation of master and slave. Absolute knowing is nothing more nor less than knowing from the perspective of the finite human subject or subjects, that is, from the angle of vision of one or more human beings who are situated within society and history.

## 7. REASON AND SPIRIT

In the *Phenomenology*, Hegel refutes the Kantian view of pure reason as early as the Introduction, where he denies that we can know that or know how a representation of independent reality relates to it. In the chapter on Reason, he relates Kant's view of knowledge to Descartes's. Kant's concern with the relation of an appearance to an object does not go beyond, and hence fails to resolve, Descartes's problem of the relation of ideas in the mind to the independent world. In response to Descartes, Hegel denies any link between certainty and truth. Certainty is not sufficient for truth, but rather insufficient, since it does not justify the claim that one in fact grasps the way the world is. Spirit is his positive suggestion in order to justify claims to know on the basis of human beings situated in society and

history. If Kantian reason is *a priori*, hence pure, then spirit is the impure reason of finite individuals whose claims to know arise within and are justified through the social framework. Hegel's rival view depends on taking the subject of knowledge seriously, hence as acknowledging and elaborating the fundamental Cartesian insight that all claims to objective knowledge depend on subjectivity.

In justifying claims to know in terms of human beings, Hegel partly follows Vico, whom he did not know, and the British empiricists, whom he did. Vico, an early anti-Cartesian, anticipates the idea that knowledge crucially depends on finite human knowers. In a sense, the British empiricists also anticipate this idea in theories of human knowledge based on "thin" concepts of subjectivity. Their views of subjectivity are "thin" since they have no grasp of the way the human subject is related to the surrounding social context and to history. Hegel draws the consequences of the Cartesian insight that claims to know are based on the real human subject. In the chapter on Spirit, he replaces the Kantian "null" view of the subject and the empiricist "thin" view of subjectivity with a "thick" view of the cognitive subject as spirit, or real human being. It is a measure of the difficulty of understanding his theory that it has been so severely misunderstood, even by those well placed to grasp its significance. Lukács, who is one of the best Marxist students of Hegel, famously accuses him of substituting a mythological concept for human being, of failing to grasp the real historical subject.<sup>29</sup>

## **8. THE FINITE HUMAN BEING IN CONTEXT**

In the chapter on Spirit, Hegel elaborates a "thick," thoroughly contextualized view of the human. Like Aristotle, Hegel believes that it is the nature of the human being as a political animal to live in a state. The exposition of true spirit and ethics reveals that and how people produce the sociopolitical context that is the theater of their actions. As human beings, we are not transcendent to, but immanent in, our world. Hegel restates the constructivist thrust of Kant's Copernican

revolution, or the claim that we know only what we in some sense produce, as the so-called idealist thesis. The fact that we ourselves produce our social context justifies the idealist thesis that in knowing we know only ourselves. Hegel elaborates this idea in his exposition of self-alienated spirit and culture or education. German speakers will know that *Bildung*, which means both “culture” and “education,” distantly points to *Bild*, meaning “picture,” or “image.” We recall Plato’s mimetic theory of culture, in particular his views of poetry and art as narrative imitations of reality, which was central at least as late as the Romantics.<sup>30</sup> Hegel understands “culture” in a wider way to include not only poetry and art but also the Enlightenment, the French Revolution, and so on—in a word, whatever we ourselves produce through self-alienation or self-objectification. In employing the term *Bildung*, he suggests that we educate ourselves about the world and ourselves in a sociohistorical context, which is an “image” (although not necessarily in the sense of a faithful, say, photographic, sense) of who we are. As a manifestation of the human spirit, culture has an important epistemological function that is only magnified in philosophy, its highest form.

Culture in the widened, Hegelian sense of the term includes organized religion, the Enlightenment and the French Revolution. Hegel studies the opposition between reason and faith in the concrete context provided by the conflict between organized religion, particularly Roman Catholicism, and the Enlightenment reaction against religion. His remarks on faith and pure insight exhibit the limits of each with respect to social reality. Like Kantian morality, which is a secularized version of religion, the faith of Roman Catholicism has no content at all, whereas Enlightenment reason trades in abstract ideas that ignore the real world. The struggle of the Enlightenment with superstition turns on its depiction of religion from a utilitarian perspective, which religion rejects. The truth of the Enlightenment lies in its turn toward utility as the only practical criterion. Yet the concern with utility is thwarted in the great French Revolution, where the interest in absolute freedom tragically led to the famous terror. Hegel’s analysis further brings out an interesting connection between the abstract character of the Kantian theory of morality and the self-

stultifying nature of the greatest political event of modern times. Like faith, both simply ignore, or “negate,” the social world.

Hegel drives this point home in his chapters on Spirit Certain of Itself and Morality. He is concerned here with three attitudes toward practical action that emerged as successors to the abstract Kantian view in the post-revolutionary world. In comparison to the seamless unity between the ethical individual and his world, he discerns a failure to integrate the moral subject with its world, with moral self-determination (or with insight), and with social reality in general. His remarks on the moral view of the world renew his earlier critique of Kantian morality by exposing the conflict between duty and reality. His remarks on displacement (*Verstellung*) discuss the effort, ingredient in the Kantian model of morality, to consider social reality as in effect a mere fiction. The closing comments on Conscience and the Beautiful Soul bring out the emptiness of the Romantic view of the self as all reality, which is intended as a successor to the Kantian moral view of the equally abstract subject as wholly self-determining without regard to the real external world.

## 9. SPIRIT AND EPISTEMOLOGICAL JUSTIFICATION

Knowledge claims depend on a demonstration of epistemological objectivity. In the chapters on Reason and Spirit, the detailed critique of Kantian morality identifies the sort of problems into which one falls in trying to justify claims of how to act prior to and independent of the social world. Since knowledge of what to do is a type of knowledge, Hegel's analysis of Kantian morality and his rival view of ethics point to the more general problem of the justification of claims to know.

In the *Phenomenology*, Hegel suggests that knowledge claims are neither merely empirical nor transcendental, but rather depend on human subjects, whose theories emerge within and depend upon the mutable social context. As our context changes, our specific claims to know, including our views of what counts as knowledge, also change. Human knowledge is intrinsically historical in two senses: it reflects



the changing context in which it arises, and it is always subject to further modification when and if the conceptual background changes. The obvious advantage of Hegel's approach is to explain human knowledge from the perspective of the human subject. Hegel's idea of spirit meets the Cartesian requirement of free thought through an account of the historical emergence of self-consciousness. It further respects Kant's Copernican, constructivist view that we know only what we "make" while clarifying its mysterious nature.

Through his view of human being as spirit, Hegel formulates a theory of knowledge whose cognitive subject is none other than real human beings. The modern individual is aware that he realizes himself in what he does, knows what he does, and, accordingly, knows himself. The human subject is "caught up" or "situated" in the real world in which we act. Individuals, who are called upon to act in imperfect situations in part beyond human control, realize their purposes in their actions. Society instantiates human law, which is based on so-called divine law. The latter concept is understood not from a religious perspective but as the unwritten law illustrated in the family and accepted by everyone within a given social context.

## **10. EPISTEMIC HOLISM, SOCIAL JUSTIFICATION, AND HISTORY**

For thinkers like Descartes and Kant, knowledge claims arise from the perspective of the isolated subject. Through spirit, Hegel invents the plural subject, or the group which provides the epistemological criteria and the ethical values to which individuals appeal in order to justify claims to know or to make ethical decisions. Such claims always arise within and are justified in relation to the surrounding context that we share with other human beings. As concerns epistemology, Hegel's view of spirit is a theory of the contextual justification of objective claims to know. This view was an important innovation, well ahead of its time in the nineteenth century. It is even more timely now, in a period when probably no one accepts Kant's view that it is possible or even interesting to work out the abstract conditions of knowledge in general.

At present there are three main approaches to justifying objective claims to know. One alternative, with roots in Plato and Descartes, consists in the claim of direct knowledge of the way the world is. This alternative is currently favored by such writers as Davidson and Putnam. The second approach lies in epistemic holism, according to which claims to know are justified in relation to a conceptual framework. The leading proponent of this approach was Quine. The third leading alternative is the idea that claims to know are justified in a social fashion. This conception is ascribed to the later Wittgenstein, perhaps to Sellars, and more recently to Brandom.

Hegel's conception of spirit offers a fourth, more historical alternative, which remains in advance of the current discussion. He rejects claims for direct realism since knowledge is never immediate, while embracing epistemic holism, suitably understood, and social justificationism: Our knowledge claims are justified within a series of interlocking theories that emerge within and derive their support in a social setting. From this perspective, claims to know are dependent on concepts, norms, conceptual frameworks, and ideas which emerge in a particular historical moment and change over time. Hegel is routinely but mistakenly criticized as claiming closure. This criticism is unfair since he rather holds that epistemological claims are always and necessarily open, never immune from possible revision as epistemological and ethical standards change and new items emerge in experience. Hegel's position excludes the very idea of a permanent vantage point such as an invariant categorial framework or a form of life from which to pass judgment now and forever, and hence it forbids in principle any *veileity* of an escape from history.

## **II. EPISTEMOLOGICAL RELATIVISM AND HISTORICISM**

Hegel's theory of cognition in the *Phenomenology* is a theory of knowledge as intrinsically historical. According to Hegel, knowledge appears in and depends upon human time, the time of history. Claims to know are not only formulated by human beings, but further

depend on the fact that and the way in which their human capacities are shaped by the institutionalized social practices of the communities in which they live, as well as their changes over time. Since Lukács, who claims that Hegel's concept of man as a historical being improves on Aristotle's concept of man as a political being, Hegel's readers have been aware that the *Phenomenology* is about history.<sup>31</sup> But there is little clarity as to what this means. According to Forster, who seems to overlook the difference between morality and ethics, hence the difference between reason and spirit, Hegel intended to write a historical recapitulation in the chapter on Spirit but ended up rewriting parts of the chapter on Reason.<sup>32</sup>

Concern with Hegel's historicism seems not to extend to epistemological relativism. Historicism and relativism are related doctrines. All forms of historicism rest on relativism, although not all forms of relativism are historical. Relativism is a controversial doctrine which has been criticized over the centuries since Protagoras, most of whose writings have been lost. In attributing historical relativism to Hegel, one must be careful about what is being claimed. I am not claiming that Hegel is committed to the perceptual relativism criticized by Plato.<sup>33</sup> I am also not claiming that he violates the law of excluded middle, which Aristotle regards as the condition of rational discourse.<sup>34</sup> I am further not suggesting that he is interested in cultural relativism as in Sumner.<sup>35</sup> I am rather claiming that, in virtue of his view of the norms and conceptual frameworks in terms of which first-order constative claims (such as, "This is a chair") and evaluative claims (such as, "This is good") are carried out, knowledge claims are indexed to the historical moment. If cognitive claims are relative to their historical moment, hence relative to time and place, then Hegel's historicism commits him to epistemological relativism.

## 12. CONCLUSION: HEGEL ON SPIRIT AND KNOWLEDGE

Since Hegel's view of spirit arose within the context of the epistemological discussion at the beginning of the nineteenth century, both

the world and the debate have changed. The best way to determine whether his concept of spirit is still relevant to the problem of knowledge is to relate it to the present stage of the discussion. Modern philosophy since Descartes has been dominated by variations on the Cartesian theme of epistemological foundationalism as the appropriate epistemological strategy. As we pass the millennium, it is now widely accepted that this strategy has run its course. After centuries of discussion, with some exceptions, there is widespread agreement that this strategy has never been adequately formulated and it cannot be successfully reformulated.

The reactions to this state of affairs have been diverse. Some writers, such as Rorty and the French postmodernists, turn to skepticism in drawing the consequences of the failure to demonstrate epistemological foundationalism. Others, such as Gadamer, insist on the need to formulate our claims to know from within the tradition, from wherever we are at a given time, although there is no way to grasp what is true, no way to surpass mere interpretation.

On this analysis, the only possibilities are epistemology, which alone defends truth, and hermeneutics, which abandons it for mere interpretation. It is mistaken to see this dichotomy as reflecting the only possible attitudes toward knowledge. Hegel offers a plausible alternative, a way to understand that what we mean by true is not a grasp of independent reality but rather a grasp of what we experience in terms of the criteria and norms we currently accept, but may no longer accept in a future moment. In our post-foundationalist world, the idea of spirit constitutes a way to avoid skepticism by acknowledging the need to revise our epistemological claims of what human beings are capable of doing, which is to seek knowledge from within the changing social world by which they are formed and on which they continue to rely.

## NOTES

1. Hardimon's failure to give more than cursory attention to spirit weakens his recent study. See Michael Hardimon, *Hegel's Social Philosophy: The Project of Reconciliation* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1994).

2. Although one cannot be sure, to the best of my knowledge there is only a single book on spirit in the entire Hegel literature. See Alan Olson, *Hegel and the Spirit: Philosophy as Pneumatology* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1992).

3. See, for example, Cyril O'Regan, *The Heterodox Hegel* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1994).

4. See H. S. Harris, *Hegel's Ladder*, 2 vols. (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1997).

5. See Michael Forster, *Hegel's Idea of a Phenomenology of Spirit* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998).

6. See "Doctrine of the Holy Ghost and of the Trinity," in Adolph Harnack, *History of Dogma*, vol. 4, trans. E. B. Speirs and James Millar (London: Williams and Norgate, 1898), pp. 108–37.

7. See "The Three and the One," in Jaroslav Pelikan, *The Christian Tradition: A History of the Development of Doctrine*, vol. 1: *The Emergence of the Catholic Tradition (100–600)* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1971), pp. 211–18.

8. See Harnack, *History of Dogma*, p. 110.

9. Gregory of Nazianus, Or. 21.33 (PG 35: 1121), cited in Pelikan, *Christian Tradition*, p. 213.

10. See Olson, *Hegel and the Spirit*, p. 16.

11. See Montesquieu, *The Spirit of Laws*, trans. David Wallace Carrithers (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1977), p. 289.

12. See *Ideen zur Philosophie der Geschichte der Menschheit*, in J. G. Herder, *Ideen zur Kulturphilosophie*, ed. Otto Braun and Nora Braun (Leipzig: Insel-Verlag, 1911), p. 260.

13. See the Seventh and Eighth Addresses in Johann Gottlieb Fichte, *Addresses to the German Nation*, trans. George A. Kelly (New York: Harper, 1968), pp. 92–130.

14. See G. W. F. Hegel, *Early Theological Writings*, trans. T. M. Knox, trans. Richard Kroner (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1971), pp. 182–301.

15. See *Hegel-Werke*, ed. Eva Moldenhauer and Karl Markus Michel, 20 vols. (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1971), *Berliner Schriften*, 10, p. 69.

16. See *Hegel-Werke*, 17, p. 327.

17. Inwood believes that *Geist* refers both to spirit and to mind, and that mind cannot be excluded from any of Hegel's main uses of *Geist*. See "Spirit" in Michael Inwood, *A Hegel Dictionary* (Cambridge: Blackwell Publishers, 1992), pp. 274–77.

18. See Harris, *Hegel's Ladder*, 2, p. 130.

19. Terry Pinkard, *Hegel's Phenomenology* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1994), p. 268.

20. This view is represented by Habermas. See Jürgen Habermas, *Knowledge and Human Interests*, trans. Jeremy J. Shapiro (Boston: Beacon, 1971).

21. Immanuel Kant, *Kritik der reinen Vernunft*, in *Kants gesammelte Schriften*, vol. 3, ed. Königlich Preussischen Akademie der Wissenschaften (Berlin: G. Reimer, 1902), xxii. Hereafter cited as *Critique of Pure Reason*, B.

22. See Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, B xii.

23. According to Kant, knowledge (*Erkenntnis*) begins in but is not limited to what is given in experience. See Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, B 1.

24. See Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, B 181.

25. See Tom Rockmore, *Hegel's Phenomenology of Spirit: An Introduction* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997).

26. See Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, B xxvii.

27. See Letter to Herz (21 July 1772), in Immanuel Kant, *Philosophical Correspondence, 1759–1799*, trans. Arnulf Zweig (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1967), pp. 70–76.

28. See Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, B 382.

29. See “Reification and the Consciousness of the Proletariat,” in Georg Lukács, *History and Class Consciousness*, trans. Rodney Livingstone (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1971), pp. 83–222. For discussion, see chapters 3–5 in Tom Rockmore, “Irrationalism,” in *Lukács and the Marxist View of Reason* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1992), pp. 103–74.

30. See Erich Auerbach, *Mimesis: The Representation of Reality in Western Literature*, trans. Willard Trask (Garden City: Doubleday Anchor, 1957).

31. See Georg Lukács, *The Young Hegel*, trans. Rodney Livingstone (Cambridge: MIT, 1976), pp. 269–72.

32. See Forster, *Hegel's Idea*, p. 454.

33. See Plato, *Theaetetus* 152a–b.

34. See Aristotle, *Metaphysics*, *Gamma*.

35. See William Graham Sumner, *Folkways* (New York: Ginn and Company, 1907).

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**H**egel's first major philosophical work is one of philosophy's true masterpieces. Despite its notorious difficulty, it is one of the most influential philosophical works ever written. The *Phenomenology* is not only the first presentation of Hegel's system; it is also an account of the historical development of Geist (spirit or mind) from Greek tragedy to the triumph of philosophy as science in Hegel's own time.

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## Humanity Books

An Imprint of Prometheus Books

59 John Glenn Drive  
Amherst, New York 14228-2119

[www.prometheusbooks.com](http://www.prometheusbooks.com)

ISBN 978-1-59102-056-1

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9 781591 020561